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5

IN THE LAP OF FORTUNE.

A Story

"STRANGER THAN FICTION."

BY JOSEPH HATTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY OF POPPIES," "THE TALLANTS OF
BARTON," ETC.

"To be thrown upon one's own resources is to be cast IN THE VERY LAP
OF FORTUNE; for our faculties then undergo a development, and display an
energy, of which they were previously unsusceptible." —FRANCIS
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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IN THE LAP OF FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST OF JACOB'S HAPPY DAYS AT CARTHAGE ; UPON WHICH NOTABLE OCCASION HE RECEIVES BAD NEWS AND GOOD ADVICE, AND EXPERIENCES THE SWEET SORROW OF PARTING.

MHEN he wrote the letter mentioned in my previous chapter, Jacob Martyn little thought he would be suddenly summoned home a few months afterwards ; and never for a moment, in all his dreams and speculations concerning the future, did he calculate upon such events as those which were

then progressing towards consummation. So far as he was concerned, that short space of time had been full of happiness. He had frequently seen Lucy; they had walked hand in hand, full of hope, through the dead leaves of autumn; and Jacob had written to Lucy, and Lucy had written to Jacob, when winter set icy barriers and very early sunsets between the young lover and his half-holiday walks to the house among the trees. Mr. Spawling had once or twice been on the point of writing to Mr. Martyn upon the subject of the tender relationship between Jacob and Lucy; but he had each time dismissed it as unworthy of serious attention. "Boys will be boys," he thought to himself, "and girls will be girls—with this addition in the present case, however," ran on Mr. Spawling's thoughts, "that there are few girls so fair as Dorothy's cousin."

"I am sorry," began Mr. Spawling, at breakfast on a March morning, which Jacob Martyn had cause long to remember, "I am exceedingly sorry to learn, Jacob, that

you must leave us to-day on a journey of a sorrowful character. You have had a letter this morning?"

"I have, sir," said Jacob, sadly.

Spen gazed steadfastly into his coffee cup, and Dorothy, looking at Jacob with tears in her eyes, said she "hoped things would turn out better than was thought."

"I trust they will. And you must be hopeful too, Jacob, my boy; but never forget that we all have our cares and troubles, and that there are times when adversity is a blessing, coming to us as the forerunner of real and lasting peace," said Mr. Spawling.

Spen still looked at his coffee, and tears trickled slowly down Dorothy's ruddy cheeks.

"You have my heartiest sympathy, Jacob. I shall feel your trouble as if it were my own. We have been acquainted with each other a long time now; and for my own part, Jacob, the more I have known of you the higher you have risen in my estimation. Do not think I flatter; I am not given to

mere lip compliments ; you will have the good sense to regard what I say in the proper light. Praise and commendation, fairly earned, represent a just debt, and I pay it willingly and with satisfaction."

" You are very kind, sir," said Jacob, his face beaming with gratitude.

" Whatever may be our respective destinies, Jacob, I am sure we shall always remember each other with esteem and respect."

" Yes, sir," said Jacob.

" We cannot say what the future may have in store for us. When autumn tinges the leaf its sure decay has begun. The fruit falls with its own ripeness. But true affection lives on to the last ; and memory has consoling pleasures, sad though they sometimes be, for those who have lived to wear grey hairs. Old men look for their pleasures in memory. It is youth which looks hopefully into the future. May yours be a bright one, Jacob ! Do not expect it to be without clouds, and

storms, and tempests. Affliction will surely come to you, sooner or later. Already you have tasted of the bitter cup. When next it is presented to your lips, take it meekly, submissively, and religiously. We are the creatures of an all-powerful and beneficent Being who ordains everything to a good and wise end. He puts us through the fire of adversity that we may be made the purer for the burning, and our afflictions are the offspring of His mercy. If ever you find it difficult to realise this, my dear boy, go down upon your knees and seek instruction and consolation at the hands of Him who will never desert you so long as you seek Him ; and whose love is as infinite as His wisdom, and whose mercy endureth for ever."

Mr. Spawling spoke these words so solemnly, with an elocution so touching, and in a voice so rich and musical, that his hearers were no less astonished than they were affected. And when Mr. Spawling, after a short pause, said, "Let us

pray," they fell upon their knees and joined the schoolmaster in his supplications with true religious fervour.

Family prayers had not formed part of the domestic arrangements of Mr. Spawling's household, though a blessing was asked upon every meal, and Mr. Spawling frequently closed the day by reading a chapter from the Bible; so that there was something unusual in the present proceeding, which would have been impressive from its novelty had it not been touching from its earnestness.

The truth is, the letter which Mr. Spawling had received prepared the schoolmaster for the event of Mr. Martyn's death, which it was feared would take place within a few days. This sad news could hardly be said to have been unexpected, though the information appeared to come with terrible suddenness. On his last journey to London Mr. Martyn had taken a severe cold, which had settled upon his lungs; in addition to which he had for some time past been suffering from disease of

the heart. Poor Mr. Martyn was dying of disappointment and trouble. If his journey to London had been successful, he would not have taken cold. Mental anxiety predisposes men to all the ailments under the sun.

"And now, good-bye for the present, Jacob," said Mr. Spawling, putting out his hand. "Remember my words, and God bless you."

"Good-bye, sir," said Jacob. "You have been very kind to me, and I shall never forget it."

Mr. Spawling here left the room, just as Spen began to give note of the commencement of another scholastic day. The bell tolled slowly this morning, from first to last. Spen afterwards told Dorothy that he felt as if he were operating at a funeral.

"How solemn master was! It's enough to upset anybody—I wonder he did so," said Dorothy, when she was alone with Jacob. "But he has changed of late. He gets dreaming up in that room, and reading

until he is quite strange sometimes. The letter you got did not say Mr. Martyn was dangerously ill, Jacob, did it?"

"No, Dorothy. Aunt Keziah says that father has been unwell for some weeks, that he is worse during the last few days, and wishes me to come and see him. I am not so much alarmed at it, Dorothy, as I otherwise might be, because I have asked him to let me leave school, and aunt Keziah says, in a postscript, that it is possible I may not return to Cartown again."

"You don't say so, Jacob!"

"I do; you know why I wish to leave here, Dorothy?"

"Well, yes; and I like you for it, sir. But still I am sorry."

"You must take care of Lucy for me, Dorothy."

"Ah! heaven bless her. You will go and say good-bye to her?"

"Of course I shall, Dorothy."

"You can go on there now; Will Tunster can take up your box here, and call for you on his way."

"Thank you, Dorothy; how kind and considerate you are."

Spen entered the house at this juncture, with a small vessel in one hand and a piece of Indian ink in another. It was mapping-day, and the merriman had been filling in the waving snakish wriggling twining twisting lines, indicating rivers around the western hemisphere.

"I just ran off to bid you good-bye, Jacob," said Spen. "Cheer up; don't be frightened at Mr. Spawling being so tragic this morning; he was carried away by his feelings and his eloquence."

"I am not frightened, Spen," said Jacob, shaking his friend by the hand.

"That's right; good-bye, Jacob," said Spen, returning the grasp. "We shall soon meet again; but tip me a letter."

Then their eyes met; they looked sadly at each other, and "Good-bye" was repeated in a low whisper.

"If I should not come back, Spen," said Jacob, following the mapper as he slowly left the house, "you will——"

"Write to you every day," said Spen, finishing the sentence.

"Yes, but that is not what I was going to say. You will—" and Jacob paused a second time.

"Never forget you, and take the first opportunity of seeing you again," said Spen.

"Yes, yes, my dear fellow," said Jacob, "and you'll have an eye upon Lucy sometimes; and watch over her for me in my absence."

"Lucy! ah, bless her, won't I, though? But Jacob, suppose *I* was to fall in love with her."

Jacob smiled at the remark, and Mr. Spawling's two boarders shook hands once more, and parted.

"Now I think I will go, Dorothy," said Jacob, re-entering the house.

"Dear me, how one thinks of all sorts of things when folks is going away like this," said Dorothy. "There is one thing I want to ask, so that nothing shall be on my mind. You'll never think about that morning I

was so rough with you, Jacob—the very first morning you came? Lor', how time does fly, to be sure!"

"I shall remember nothing but your kindness, because, indeed, I have no other memories of you, Dorothy," said Jacob.

In less than half an hour Jacob was walking to the house among the trees. A March wind rollicked by him on his way. The tinkling of sheep-bells came over hedges that were swelling with the earliest reanimating influences of spring. Field-labourers were calling to each other; and there was a fresh earthy smell from the newly-turned furrows, that were beginning to make long lines on the brown soil, as if Nature had turned schoolmaster and were ruling giant copy-books. Rooks were cawing in the trees and holding great meetings about family rights of building on certain branches. Sundry other birds, which had mated in the previous month, were gathering wool and sticks and hay for making nests in out-of-the-way places. The world which had been dead was

coming to life again. Jacob was almost shocked at his own want of sensibility. He felt happy in spite of his father's illness and notwithstanding his solemn parting with Mr. Spawling. Sorrow seemed to him at that time an impossible sensation. The song of birds, the chattering of rooks, the labourer whistling in the fields, the bright sunshine, the bursting buds, and the hot pulsation of first love in his heart—Jacob's feelings were in strong sympathy with nature.

"How you frighten me!" Lucy exclaimed, as Jacob entered the cottage unperceived.

"Is the surprise agreeable?" said Jacob, stealing his arm round Lucy and kissing her before she could reply.

"Jacob!" said Lucy, starting from his side, "you are positively rude."

Lucy's eyes flashed. She picked up her back-comb and looked almost angry.

"I am very sorry," said Jacob. "You are angry."

"No, indeed I am not," said Lucy; "but

you surprised me at first, and then to take that sudden advantage of my confusion!"

Jacob could not tell whether Lucy was angry or not.

"And you have caught me in the middle of house-cleaning," she said.

That was the grievance. Lucy did not object to Jacob kissing her; but she could not endure his seeing her with dirty hands. Her face was not clean either, and she had on a grimy apron. Fancy Hebe cleaning the hearth with a dirty face and her hair falling down! Jacob thought Lucy all the prettier for this domestic taint. Her cheeks were red, and her print dress showed to perfection the round contour of her figure. There are ladies in Mayfair who would look very drabs in such attire, and with dirty faces, (if such a contingency were possible); but Lucy would have looked ladylike and Hebe-like under any circumstances.

"Ah, you will forgive me when you know why I have come," said Jacob.

"I do forgive you; I should not have

objected even to your rudeness if I had been dressed," Lucy replied, her eyes bent upon the ground.

"I am going to leave Cartown," said Jacob.

"When?"

"Very soon."

"Next week?"

"Earlier than that."

"Oh, Jacob, you should have told me before," said Lucy, with a look of real tenderness.

"You are sorry," said Jacob.

"It is very sudden, is it not?" said Lucy, not quite willing to say that she was sorry.

"You will think it sudden and a little sad when you know all about it," said Jacob, lowering his voice and pressing the hand that somehow or other had found its way into his own.

"Tell me at once," said Lucy, "or I shall think something very dreadful has occurred."

"To-day, dear, to-day," said Jacob.

Lucy did not now attempt to disguise

her sorrow. Her nature was less enthusiastic than Jacob's. She was not easily moved from the even tenour of her way. To her, life was a calm river, with none of the dashing over precipices and leaping over stones which were characteristic of Jacob's temperament. Lucy's was a quiet, loving nature that soon bent to circumstances. She liked a bit of finery, as her aunt would truly say—what pretty girl does not? And she liked admiration. When some of the gentlemen who came to shoot over my lord's estate called at the cottage, Lucy always looked her best and was as haughty as a queen. She made fun of Jacob when first he came to the cottage, mimicked his voice and manner when he left; but by degrees he gained a higher place in her thoughts; his companionship had broken down the monotony of her existence. When she found that he was going to leave Cartown her voice faltered, her heart beat convulsively, and when she went upstairs to wash her face and change her dress there were tears in her eyes.

She forgot her mortification at being discovered cleaning the house, and she came down again with a bright blue ribbon in her hair, and a clean, pretty dress, and coquettish little apron ; and while Jacob sat admiring her, she took a little brush and gave the finishing touches to the polished and shining hearth, which had been cleaned and brightened by her own fair hands.

Jacob told her he was going to begin the battle of the world for her sake, to win a name for both, when nothing but death could part them. He was not likely to return to Cartown again to live. Middleton was no distance truly, but still there was the going away under circumstances so different to those which had hitherto marked their partings. Heretofore they had only said "Good night." Now they would say "Good-bye." When they met again would anything have occurred to change their love ?

" How silent you are, Lucy," said Jacob, leaning over her chair.

Lucy was very quiet all the day long; her movements were more gentle than usual. When she did speak it was almost in a whisper. Jacob was content to sit with her hand in his, listening to the birds singing, and with his brain full of bright pictures of the future. When they walked out together she leaned more heavily on his arm than ever she had done before, and the sense of their first real parting seemed to deepen into a sacred feeling, a confiding trustfulness, that was best interpreted by silence. Lucy had not known how much she loved Jacob until now; while the consciousness that his love was reciprocated heightened Jacob's hopes of days to come, and if possible made Lucy seem to him more beautiful than ever.

Mrs. Cantrill and her husband had gone out to see a neighbour at Crossley whom they had not visited for many years. The old man had only left his bed about a week previously, and the change, it was thought, would be beneficial to him. The squire's steward had offered, the day before, to let

a conveyance (which was going through Crossley and would return in the evening) call for them, and the poor old couple had made holiday—the first for a good round number of years.

So the lovers were alone. The time passed very rapidly. Their talk was chiefly the language of the eye and the pressure of the hand. And still the clock ticked and beat out the time with marvellous speed. The little sprites that swung upon the pendulum sent it to and fro with a swift perversity ; a malicious hand turned the fingers round and round, in provoking harmony with the swaying pendulum. The fire in the shining grate burned quickly, and soon became white and dusty, as though night were coming before the afternoon was over ; while a cricket began to sing long before its customary time.

At length Lucy placed cups and saucers upon the table and made the tea. How delightful it was to see Lucy cutting bread and butter and sitting at the head of the table.

"Some day we may sit in our own house and have tea together," said Jacob.

"We must not think of it; first love is never successful, Dorothy says," Lucy replied, with a touch of her former archness.

"Dorothy does not think so in her heart, though she may say so," answered Jacob. "I hope to earn a house very soon; would you not like to live in London, Lucy? Mr. Spawling says London is the place for enterprising spirits."

"I don't know," said Lucy; "it is very dull here."

"Yes, very; is it not? I wish you lived in a town, Lucy."

"Why?"

"I don't know; I always think somebody will be running away with you down here."

Lucy laughed at this, and said Jacob was a silly boy.

"If I were a lord, or a great man's son, and came here to shoot, and had plenty of money, I should try and run away with

you," said Jacob, handing Lucy her own bread and butter.

"Yes, but other people are not so silly as you are, Jacob; you think so much of me, you see."

"I do, indeed; you are all the world to me, Lucy; you shall see; some day I will do wonderful things; it is a pity this is not the age of knight-errantry."

"You would go to the wars then and be killed, and a great deal of good that would do," said Lucy.

And they went on talking lovers' talk until time seemed to be in a conspiracy against them. The wind began to rise; the evening shadows fell upon the window; the clock ticked faster than ever. Jacob, after a great deal of persuasion, induced Lucy to sing the factory hymn, in which she broke down and burst into tears, and then, for the first time, Jacob wished the last five minutes were over. The sweet sorrows of parting were giving way to the bitterness of saying farewell.

"My dear, dear Lucy," said Jacob at

last, both his arms round the weeping girl,
“good-bye ; God bless you !”

Will Tunster’s horn sounded shrill and clear through the leafless trees of March. Before the echo passages of “Tom Moody” had reached the last quivering variation, which was Will’s especial pride and glory, Jacob was at the cottage door. He went away with the picture of it in his memory, to carry it about with him, to fill into his dreams—the home of his love, the scene of his happiest hours. Jacob had often talked of the battle of life ; he had pictured himself a victor in the conflict, coming home in triumph to stand beside Lucy at the altar. From this time—this last day at Cantrill’s—his soldiership, his courage, his prowess, his endurance, his faith in love and duty were to undergo great trials of warfare. Will Tunster’s horn was sounding the first alarm of the battle.



CHAPTER II.

“WHITHER GOEST THOU, MISFORTUNE? TO
WHERE THERE IS MORE.”

MIDDLERON-IN-THE-WATER, I believe, retains many old customs even in the present day. Neither badger-baiting nor cock-fighting is quite extinct in the North Midland borough. Wife beating is looked upon as the exercise of a manly right. The proverb of a spaniel, a woman, and a walnut tree being the better for beating had its origin at Middleton. In the early days of Jacob Martyn there were trapper girls in the pits and women-slaves on the banks. Middleton fought hard to retain these glo-

rious privileges when Parliament interfered with the local rights of property. Little sweeps were forced up the Middleton flues long after the Act of Parliament against this particular kind of cruelty was passed. In the old days they used to duck shrews, burn witches, drive stakes through suicides, and assemble together in joyous crowds to see criminals whipped or hanged.

The Middletonians clung to everything old, whether it was bad or good. The most harmless of their ancient customs was that of the curfew bell. It was tolling as Jacob and the mail driver neared the town, tolling just as it always had done from the first, and the sound brought back to Jacob's remembrance many strange recollections, including that most memorable incident of all, the arrival of his aunt Keziah. Will Tunster answered the bell with a solemn bugle performance of "Tom Moody," after which he resumed a somewhat lugubrious attempt at conversation, which had not by any means been successful on the road. Now that they were entering the town,

however, Will thought it was necessary to come to the point at which he had long been aiming.

"Hope you won't be down-hearted," he said in his strong northern dialect.

"I do not know that I have any particular cause to be so," said Jacob, who had received a very different letter to that which aunt Keziah had written to Mr. Spawling.

"I'm afeard thou has, Mester Jacob, but thou won't be so much at first as after. When a chap falls down and is badly hurt, he doesn't feel it so much at the time as after, thou sees."

Will flicked his horse with the whip by way of emphasis, and Jacob made no reply.

"I had a talk with Dorothy, thou sees," went on the driver, "before I took up thy box at Spawling's, and I've heard summat o' what's been going on in these parts lately. Bad luck always runs his cattle in pairs."

Will flicked his horse again, and dragged

at the reins as if his willing steed were one of the demon's ill-begotten cattle.

"I don't understand you. I am not prepared for the ill news which you seem to suggest," said Jacob, drawing nearer to the driver, and trying to look up into his face, which was impossible, seeing that the night was dark, and that the town lamps were therefore not lighted.

They were just entering the town of Middleton. Jacob could hear the water rushing over the mill-weir by the bridge. "Well, it's a pity thou hast not been more prepared, Jacob," said the driver, with a familiar expression of sympathy. "Keep up thy spirits. It's no good meeting a winter storm with one's jacket off, as if it was summer."

"You alarm me, Will," said Jacob.

"Nay, don't be alarmed: set thy teeth, clench thy fists, and summon thy courage."

"What is it, Will? tell me before we stop; why this is our house—we are at home."

"Hush, lad; don't say no more just now;

wait a bit ; keep up thy courage and trust in God," said Will, pulling his horse into a walk.

The curfew bell had ceased, making the suddenly noiseless motion of the mail-cart more impressive than the unexpected silence would otherwise have been. They were travelling over a muffled roadway. Bark cuttings, from the tannery, had been laid upon the street. So strong are local associations, that Jacob was at once reminded of the quarter sessions and the death of an eminent townsman. Tan had been chiefly used, in his memory, when the magistrates, "in quarter sessions assembled," met to try prisoners at the old Town Hall; and on these occasions it is questionable whether the boys, who rolled themselves in the soft broken bark, and pelted each other with the same, did not make more noise than the coaches and coal carts would have done upon the ordinary flags and boulders with which the streets were paved. But when the bark was strewed before a house in which death was busy, to

keep the sick chamber quieter than fear and love could keep it, the sign was respected, even in Middleton, and the knocker might have been left unmuffled.

“Surely my father is not seriously ill?” at length said Jacob to himself. He was afraid to ask the question aloud.

Tom Titsy was standing in the street waiting to carry Jacob’s box into the house. When the cart stopped he came forward and assisted Jacob to alight, never uttering a word, but returning the pressure of Jacob’s hand in a very different manner to his greeting at Cartown when he accompanied Jacob and Mr. Martyn to Clumber-side.

Will Tunster very quietly moved on his way, when Jacob and his luggage were in Tom Titsy’s custody. Tom threw the box over his shoulder, and preceded Jacob into the house.

“This way, sir,” said a prim domestic, and Jacob was ushered into a comfortable dining-room, which in the old time had been an ordinary parlour. At Jacob’s request,

Tom took a seat, and Jacob began to question him.

"How is my father, Tom?"

"Bad, Jacob; very bad," said Tom.

"But—but, Tom, there is no danger?" said Jacob, in a faltering voice.

Tom held down his head.

"Don't be afraid, Tom; tell me truly. Tom, be honest with me."

But Tom maintained a miserable silence, broken only by a sigh that said more than Jacob's worst fears had predicted since the mail-cart rolled softly on the bark carpet without.

"Illness is not the worst," at last said Tom, rising and striding across the apartment, with his lips compressed and his hands clenched.

"For God's sake, don't drive me mad!" exclaimed Jacob, grasping Tom by the arm. "If you care anything about my friendship, tell me everything. Am I a fool, or a baby, or an idiot, that you hum and ha, and nod and sigh and trifle with me thus?" Jacob's eyes flashed with indignation. "Will

Tunster treated me just as you are treating me. It is monstrous ; it is cruel."

Tom turned upon Jacob a surprised look, and stopping his indignant protest against further silence by a motion of his hand, said, " Well then, Mester Jacob, you shall know all. Pull yourself together, for you will need all your strength if you were as old as Methuselah. Follow me ; steady, steady."

Tom led the way to the kitchen. The door being ajar, he requested Jacob to walk on tiptoe and peep in towards the fire-place. Jacob did so, and saw a dwarfish-looking man sitting in the chair which Jacob's mother had been accustomed to use, and in which aunt Keziah sat on the first night when she made her appearance at Middleton.

The stranger was by no means prepossessing in appearance. He looked like a combination of several people. The head was that of a tall, muscular man, and it was reclining on the body of a stiff, thickset dwarf, with the legs of a miner, who had

bent them out of their natural shape during years of labour in narrow and stifling headings. This combination was evidently asleep with its legs on the fender.

Jacob gazed in astonishment for a few minutes, and then looked eagerly at Tom for an explanation.

"Don't you know him?" Tom inquired.

"No," said Jacob, following Tom into the dining-room.

"What! not know Barnaby the——"

"Yes, yes," said Jacob; but still he did not seem to understand what was the matter.

"Barnaby the bum-bailiff," said Tom in a whisper. "He's in possession of the place."

Jacob staggered towards a chair, as Mrs. Gompson entered the room.

"Your father would like to see you, Jacob. Dear me, how you've altered."

Aunt Keziah could not resist this expression of surprise on finding the weakly boy of a few years ago a fine handsome fellow on the verge of manhood. She had

a basin in one hand, and a napkin in the other, which she had picked up as an excuse for not shaking hands with her nephew. She felt for a moment half inclined to lay them down, on looking at him again. But the old antipathy arose when Jacob treated her with quiet, self-possessed indifference.

“ Jacob,” repeated Mrs. Gompson, “ your father wishes to see you.”

Jacob stared into vacancy, and remained silent.

“ Well : it is hardly a time to try to make disturbances,” said Mrs. Gompson, tossing her head, and walking away. “ I was in hopes we might have been on better terms than before.”

“ Stay, stay ; so we will be,” said Jacob, rising. “ I am not well ; I have heard much worse news than I expected ; indeed, I did not expect misfortune of any kind.”

“ Oh ! of course,” said aunt Keziah, glancing angrily at poor Tom ; “ there’s always babblers to tell bad news.”

Tom was hurt at this cruel taunt, but he

was compensated by a kind, sympathising, grateful glance from Jacob, who said—

“ Tom did not wish to tell me.”

“ Of course not ; making it appear all the worse by a little mystery,” said aunt Keziah.

“ Well, well ; say no more about it,” Jacob sorrowfully replied. “ I will go to my father’s room ;” and he followed Mr. Martyn’s erratic sister to the staircase.





CHAPTER III.

IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINES.

JACOB had a long and sad interview with his father, who was dangerously ill. Aunt Keziah came in and out of the sick-room while Jacob was there. His father said she had been very good and very considerate.

"I took cold in London," said Jacob's father. "But I shall soon be well; I am getting on nicely now."

Jacob's heart sank at sight of the thin hands, the pale cheeks, and the lustreless eyes.

"I am not so ill as you were," said the sick man; "not so ill as you were; no, not

so ill as you were, when I carried you into the garden. I could not do it now, Jacob ; you have grown a fine manly fellow since then."

"Aunt said you were not to talk much, father dear."

"I am only talking very quietly," said Mr. Martyn ; "only very quietly. Come closer, my boy. I have been thinking a great deal about your letters, Jacob. You are a good fellow, and I will see what can be done in the way of starting you in life. But I shall sell this newspaper. It is killing work, Jacob. Don't be afraid of my talking. I am only whispering ; come closer."

Jacob took his father's hand. It was very thin. He laid his head on the pillow by his father, who continued in a low whisper to unburthen his poor breaking heart.

"Have nothing to do with newspapers, Jacob. It is the treadwheel in another shape. You are always toiling upwards, but you don't progress ; your work is never finished. And as for the influence of the

press, it is not worth having ; it is only a perpetual worry ; you make enemies under any circumstances ; if you are independent and honest you lose your money ; if you belong to a political party your own friends do not support you. When I am about again, Jacob, we will live at our ease, and cultivate the garden. You will not grow tired of such a life as that."

" Tired, father ? No !" said Jacob.

" Then you must think about it, my boy ; we will talk it over to-morrow ; we will talk——," and the sick man dropped into a troubled sleep.

Mrs. Gompson explained to Jacob in a hard, matter-of-fact manner, that there were some papers under her brother's pillow which she thought he wished to speak about.

" He had them in his hand one day," she said ; " but he put them out of the way hurriedly, as if he did not wish me to see them ; they are under his pillow."

" I will not disturb them," said Jacob.

Mr. Martyn continued to sleep during

the greater part of the day, which was regarded by Mrs. Titsy as a very hopeful and good sign of improvement.

In the evening Jacob went into the little counting-house, and saw Mr. Julius Jennings.

Wiping his pen upon his coat-sleeve, and descending from a high stool, Jennings looked round as if to satisfy himself that Jacob was alone. Without any further greeting than a nod, he motioned Jacob to a chair.

Jennings was greatly changed. His hair was grey. He had a watchful, suspicious look. His shoulders were getting up into his neck. His chin had elongated. His elbows were more pointed than usual, and his hair had grown lower down upon his wrinkled forehead. His voice, which had once a little of the roundness of the canting preacher in it, was now harsh and grating. He was like a man in continual fear of some threatened danger.

“ You have heard all ?” said Julius, rubbing his hands nervously.

“ I have.”

“ You know who the fellow in the kitchen is ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Good,” said Julius promptly, as if anxious to clear the ground and come to the point which he had in his mind.

“ You are prepared to look into things in a business-like way ?”

“ I am.”

“ Good—you have grown into a man, sir, since we last met.”

Jacob nodded. He had never liked Jennings, and his pride resented the power which Jennings seemed to wield.

“ You know we are entirely done up ?”

“ Pray tell me all there is to tell, sir,” said Jacob.

Jennings took up a sheet of note-paper from his desk, and looking at some rough figures, frowned at the paper, thrust his bony hands deep into his pockets, and in a sententious manner gave Jacob a description of the financial position of the house.

" Debts £3,500, assets £3,500; assets not available, consisting of money spent in buildings, alterations, machinery, and organisation. Your father had £3,000 in cash when he began this new business.

Meeting of creditors on Mr. Martyn's return from London. Offered to assign everything on condition that the *Star* should be carried on for another six months, with option of re-purchase to vendor. I advised going into bankruptcy; father would not; concern went on. £1,500 of debts secured by bill of sale; there's the rub. Mrs. Gompson has told you, no doubt, of the papers under your father's pillow—copy of bill of sale, that's all—it is killing him, wearing his life out. Worst of it is, Magar has the bill of sale. Magar has been puffed in the paper for his benevolence, but lately has been trying to swindle the public, and he has been pitched into—honest but bad policy; he and some other corporation swells have sworn to stop the paper. Your father had an editor from Brighton, or somewhere—a sort of half and

half Londoner, clever no doubt, but indiscreet ; has taken a mortal hatred to Magar, and vowed he would expose the schemes of Magar and a little clique of speculators who are in power here. Magar has seized—the man in possession is Magar's man; and before the week is over we shall all go to the wall."

It was a brief story, but no item was left out. Jennings expressed no regret ; nor did he exult. He omitted to use a single scriptural quotation. He treated the matter in a business light. When he had concluded he looked at Jacob curiously, withdrew his hands from his pockets, took a pinch of snuff, and resumed his seat at the desk.

"Are you not a friend of Mr. Magar?" asked Jacob calmly.

"Not particularly," said Jennings; "why?"

"Have you no influence with him?"

"A little," said Jennings, looking straight at Jacob.

"Not sufficient to put an end to this seizure?"

"I fear not," said Jennings.

"You would if you could?"

"I would : your father has always been good to me. Magar is a stubborn man. He has risen swiftly to wealth and position. When men shoot up like that they are apt to forget old friends. It is an infernal world, sir ; a sneaking, blood-sucking, fool of a world ; a blind, time-serving world ; but no matter—every dog has his day."

Jennings rocked himself to and fro as he spoke, and seemed to be talking to himself.

"And you think there is no chance of settling this affair?" said Jacob, with an effort at business *nonchalance*, but with a sickly sensation at his heart.

"I fear not. Bonsall has behaved like a thief. He promised £2,000 whenever it was required. That was before he became M.P. Now he is a swell ; they say he is to be a Cabinet Minister ; he has kicked the ladder down ; he got up through your father's energy and hard work ; he does not answer our letters now ; he is a fool as well as a knave."

"Heaven's will be done," said Jacob.

"Amen," said Jennings. "You had better go and look round the place, if you have not done so. Have you seen the new office?"

"No."

"I wish I never had."

"Where is it?"

"At the top of the garden. The men work late to-night; you may not have another opportunity. Meanwhile if it is possible to influence Magar I will do it."

"Thank you," said Jacob, and as he left the counting-house Mr. Ephraim Magar was ushered into it.

"I began to think you were not coming," said Jennings, carefully closing the door.

"What! not keep my promise?"

"Promises are easily made and broken, nowadays," said Jennings, dryly.

"Oh, that's the game, is it? You are in one of your growling moods, eh?"

"No," said Jennings. "I don't feel over well satisfied with myself, that is all."

"Oh, it's all right, then, so far as I am

concerned?" said Magar, standing with his back to the fire. " You're only out of temper with yourself."

" You know what I want," said Jennings, fidgeting with his snuff-box.

" Me and my friends to clear out of this?"

" Yes; it is not very much to ask, considering all things," said Jennings.

" What do you mean by all things?" asked Magar, his anger perceptibly rising.

" I leave that to your imagination," said Jennings, with irritating deliberation.

" Always some damned threat in your mouth, Jennings—something underhand; you don't speak out and give it breath."

" You ought to be grateful to me on that account," said Jennings.

Magar clenched his big hard fist, and ground his teeth with rage. Jennings glanced to see where the ruler was lying. The ruler was a formidable weapon. Jennings never used a ruler, especially one with a string through it, like an officer's staff; but he kept such an instrument constantly on his desk.

"Say you will do what I wish in this matter, and we are friends for ever ; I will ask no more favours," said Jennings, in a conciliatory tone.

"I tell you I can't do it," exclaimed Magar, striding across the room. "If it were my own affair I would give way at once. They are determined to wipe the paper out, and I think the town will be the better for it. When a fellow's lost his money he shouldn't set others at defiance. They've never forgiven that attack about the accounts, and there's lots of other scores to settle ; and what is more, there is no chance, I hear, of Martyn's getting better, and we don't mean his party to buy the paper, and we don't want it ourselves, because we have one—so that's the straightforward truth ; and as I always like to be fair and above board——"

"Very well," said Jennings, leaving his stool and confronting his friend. "Now, hear what I have to say. You are aware that I never had much money, and that what I had I put into this business when it

was much needed, on the understanding that at Mr. Martyn's death I stood joint heir with his son. Now I know that the concern will pay, and you know that there is more than twenty shillings in the pound now, if the property were fairly realised, to say nothing of Martyn's original capital, which we will regard as altogether gone. Now, if you sell hastily, as you contemplate, you will make that twenty shillings no more than five, and destroy the copyright, which, in my opinion, would make the twenty shillings forty. It is against my interest that you should do this."

"I said you should find £1,000 put to your credit at the Cartown Bank," said Magar.

"It is also against my wish," continued Jennings, without noticing Magar's remark. "Martyn has suffered undeservedly, and Bonsall has behaved like a sneak and a thief."

"This is something new," said Magar. "Getting sympathetic in your old age, eh? Why, Jennings, you are a very queer fellow."

Magar thought it best to try and meet his friend's attack with banter, though he was boiling over with rage.

"I owe a little gratitude to Martyn," said Jennings.

"Gratitude," said Magar, with a sneer; "humbug!"

"It is not humbug," said Jennings, fiercely, and at the same moment softening his voice and repeating "it is not humbug, Magar," in a more deferential tone. "I am in earnest,"

"And so am I," said Magar, buttoning his shining black coat over his chest and looking defiance at his friend. "And so am I! Let us drop this palaver and talk business. I've given way to your whims too often; I make a stand here, so there, damn me!"

"Very well," said Jennings, putting his tall stool between himself and Magar, "to business, then. I forbid this forcible removal to-morrow."

Jennings spoke with a threatening deliberation, and his thin face was pallid.

Magar received the reply as if it were a blow. He shook himself together, and his eyes flashed angrily.

"I command you to dismiss the bailiff to-night; I have pleaded, and begged, and humbled myself; I now command; I say you shall do it, Ephraim Magar; you shall do it."

Jennings stamped his foot, and hissed his commands, and crouched as he hissed.

Magar deliberately walked to the door, opened it, looked out, and then, locking the door on the inside, put the key into his pocket. Jennings looked on with a sudden expression of fear.

"We want no eavesdroppers," said Magar, "that's all—no witnesses. Now, what do you mean? Once for all, what do you mean?"

Jennings shuddered as Magar approached him; and looked at the ruler.

"I mean what I say," said Jennings.
"It can't be done. What then?" said Magar.

"It must."



"It won't," shouted Magar, striking the desk with his clenched hand.

"Then beware!" hissed Jennings, his little eyes flashing fire, his nostrils distended, his long fingers stretched out; "beware, Ephraim the honest and outspoken."

"You damned villain!" shrieked Magar, unable to control his passion.

In a moment he had seized Jennings by the throat, and pinned him up, choking, against the desk. The ruler dropped upon the ground.

"I'll teach you to threaten, you miserable devil," said Magar, shaking him like a dog; "I'll put you in Cartown Gaol before the night is over."

He flung Jennings from him with a curse, and walked about the room like a caged hyena. Jennings crouched and trembled on the floor. He had been attacked too fiercely for retaliation. Then for a moment there was a dead silence.

"Get up, you fool," at length said Magar; "what an ass you must be to aggravate

me ; you know what a passionate devil I am."

Jennings made no reply. He adjusted his collar.

"It's all over. Don't be afraid. I'm sorry I did it. But you shouldn't have egged me on. Give me a pen."

Jennings handed his friend a pen, and solaced himself with a pinch of snuff.

Magar took a cheque-book from his pocket and wrote out a cheque for five hundred pounds.

"There, when you have cashed that I will give you another ; it is payable a week from this."

Magar laid the cheque upon the desk.

"Will that do ?" he asked.

Jennings nodded.

"Come, we must be friends, you and me, Jennings ; it is damned nonsense to think we are not to be. I ask your pardon and offer you my hand. Come, no more sulks."

Jennings put his hand in Magar's, and said, "All right—good night, Magar."

"Are we friends ?" asked Magar.

"We are," said Jennings.

"Then good night," said Magar, taking the key from his pocket, unlocking the door, and disappearing.

"Friends!" said Jennings, when he was once more alone, "friends! yes, as tigers in a cage are friends when the weaker of the two is afraid to show his teeth. But there shall be a settling for this," he continued, shaking his fist at the door. "Physical strength is nowhere against cunning, you horrid brute, you shall see."

Jennings paced the room, crouching in his anger, shaking his fist, and muttering curses. He went on apostrophising Magar as he walked to and fro.

"You everlasting scoundrel! I wish you could have lived the life I have endured. What a punishment!—what a punishment! Look at my grey hair, my sunken eyes, my bones ready to come through my skin. I suffer the tortures of the damned before my time. You!—you! You gross, thick, rhinoceros-hided beast! Only physical pain touches you, and that

must be something more than ordinary pain. But the day will come, Magar. It will come, depend on it! There must be a reckoning."

Jennings sat down before the fire and took several pinches of snuff.

"Why do I stay here? I am a fool. My place is beyond the seas, with a new name. Patience, patience! Always on the watch—I shall be prepared."

He got up and went to his desk, stared vacantly about the office, folded up Magar's cheque, put it into his pocket, closed his ledgers and placed them in his desk; locked his desk, lighted a candle, changed his coat for one that hung on a set of pegs, extinguished the gas, and went out at the door which had just closed upon the burly form of Ephraim Magar, twice Mayor of Middleton-in-the-Water, and a permanent magistrate of that notorious borough.





CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH JACOB MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE
OF MR. WINDGATE WILLIAMS.

THE garden was destroyed. Jacob did not require daylight to reveal this. It was dark everywhere except near the old favourite flower beds, and there stood his father's printing office glaring at him through a dozen lighted windows. The violets were gone, his mother's seat also; he was glad he had not come here in the daytime. He heard the distant roar of the river as it rolled over the weir, and he thought of the days when he went imaginary voyages to the Indies. What changes had occurred

since then, and were occurring! They would not bear thinking of. He went up to the printing office. The door was open. He ascended a flight of steps, and found himself in a spacious room, the atmosphere of which reminded him of one of Mr. Bonsall's pine houses. A number of men in their shirt-sleeves were actively engaged in setting up type, from copy of various descriptions. Tom Titsy was not in the room. A boy asked Jacob if he wanted the editor. Jacob, replying in the negative, entered an adjoining apartment, which was strewn with scraps of paper and mutilated newspapers. There was a table in the centre of the room, upon which the litter on the floor was repeated, with the variation of a few stray books, several quill pens, a bottle, and a jar. A shaded gas-light burnt dimly over the table, and left in shadow two busts which occupied brackets, one on each side of the fire-place.

While Jacob was contemplating this journalistic chaos, some one rushed in and

turned on the gas. Before Jacob had time to look round a voice said,

“Good evening, sir—good evening ; what can I do for you ?”

The speaker assumed a somewhat theatrical attitude, throwing his head back, dashing aside the collar of a loose coat, and disclosing a light waistcoat, a low collar, and a loose neckerchief. It was altogether a curious and striking figure ; it had a head covered with a profusion of dark hair, two piercing eyes, and a wide mouth, indicative of considerable humour.

Jacob bowed to the stranger and said, “Good evening.”

“Who have I the pleasure of addressing ?” asked the stranger, coming down from the imaginary pedestal upon which he had posed himself ; coming down and taking from his pocket an eye-glass, which having rubbed carefully with an old silk handkerchief, he planted in his left eye.

“I am Jacob Martyn,” said Jacob ; “I merely came in to see the place.”

“Oh ! indeed—delighted to see you—

I am Mr. Martyn's editor—take a seat, sir, I pray—rather in confusion to-night—day before publication—you feel the heat—I am sorry you found poor Mr. Martyn so ill—good man, sir—kind-natured, independent, noble-spirited man, sir," rattled on Mr. Windgate Williams. "There's my card, sir—a little soiled like its owner; ah! ha! never mind; we all get soiled in this world."

Jacob took the card, read the name, and sat down, up to the knees in old newspapers; but Mr. Williams gave him no opportunity of replying to his remarks, which he uttered in a rapid, jerky, disjointed fashion, looking fixedly at Jacob all the time.

"I hope Mr. Martyn will be enabled to manage his affairs—fine property, the *Star*—double itself in a few years—great pity if such a calamity should occur as a stoppage; but we must bend to the decrees of Fate. I have thought of getting up a company to carry it on, with Mr. Martyn as chairman; most perfect establishment,



you see—capital offices—beautiful situation—factory rather a nuisance sometimes ; but we must take the agreeable with the disagreeable—nothing is perfection in this world ; excuse my blinds [adjusting a green shade over his eyes] disfigures and makes one look strange, I know, but the eyes get weak with so much work by gas-light—will you take a drink of stout ?—obliged to have something on these busy nights.”

Mr. Windgate Williams poured out a glassful of stout, and handed it to Jacob.

At this moment a boy came into the room and asked for proofs, whereupon Mr. Williams began to make his desk in a greater state of confusion than ever, and Jacob thought it a good opportunity to escape, which he did, saying that he would not detain Mr. Williams any longer.

“ You are very kind,” said that gentleman ; “ business must be attended to, certainly—very considerate—I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again,” and the editor followed Jacob up with a running fire of words, until both were out on the

steps, and Jacob gradually got beyond the sound of the editorial voice.

The doctor had just left Mr. Martyn when Jacob re-entered the house. Jacob went upstairs, and stood by his father's bedside, and held his hand. Mr. Martyn did not speak, but he looked affectionately upon his son.

Long after his father had dozed off to sleep again, Jacob sat there, holding the clammy hand, and trying to collect his faculties for meeting the troubles which seemed to be hemming him in on all sides. Mrs. Titsy looked on, with her heart too full to speak, and her eyes too misty to see more than the form of Jacob.

"Will you not go to bed?" at length asked Mrs. Titsy, in a whisper, when the candle had burnt itself almost into the socket, and a long black tottering wick, like a small bulrush, stood above it.

"No, thank you," said Jacob; "no, thank you; I would rather sit here."

When you and I are ill, my friend, may we have by our pillow two souls as careful

of our every want, and as solicitous for our recovery, as these two before us. And may we be as patient as poor Mr. Martyn ! He knew that the nature of his disease required submission and calmness ; and for Jacob's sake he wished to be spared. Happily he knew nothing of Debt's policeman who sat in the kitchen below. But he was fully aware of the fact that years of hard-earned savings, the fruits of incessant toil, had been scattered to the winds. All he now looked forward to was a small competency, though he had no really definite reason for hoping to obtain even that. It was a hard lot : sometimes he could not help thinking so, and then he remembered the injunction of the doctors not to let anything trouble him, and he dismissed the disagreeable thoughts. Hope raised up the sinking soul and gave it glimpses of a shadowy future, with gleams of sunshine in it ; but there was a serpent underneath the sick man's pillow, and a fell disease at his heart.



CHAPTER V.

DESCRIBES THE SIEGE OF THE "STAR" PRINTING OFFICE; AND NARRATES ALL THE HUMOROUS AND MELANCHOLY INCIDENTS THEREOF.

T seemed as though the morning would never come. Daylight lingered behind the clouds of night, as if the two had leagued together to keep Middleton in perpetual darkness. Jacob had dozed occasionally, and Mrs. Titsy had once or twice fallen asleep; but both quickly awoke again and mentally chid themselves for want of thought and attention. Mr. Martyn had slept but little during the night. He had lain awake and heard the church clock

strike hour after hour, without the knowledge of his watchers. Jacob went to the window and gently drew the blind aside when the clock seemed to announce that the long dark night was really over; but a few stars were still shining upon black piles of clouds, and the sign of the "Durham Ox" was swaying to and fro in the wind. Jacob wondered if the wind was shaking the trees round Lucy's dwelling; and it gave him a pang of sorrow to think how grieved Lucy would be to hear of the misfortunes which had befallen him. And the wind grew more boisterous still. It had come for miles and miles over sea and land, and was gathering its forces in the Midland counties. It had rolled into foam the deep waters, and had awakened echoing voices in many a sea-swept cavern. Driving the clouds of night before, it had left shivered masts and sinking ships behind. Wise mariners, who had caught the first sounds of its hoarse voice, had sought shelter in creeks and bays. It was too proud and haughty to seek them out,

though they tossed and trembled as the giant passed by in full cry, with clouds of sea-gulls screaming overhead. Morning began to show grey streaks in the east as the wind came ashore. The clouds were rent in red and grey shreds and black patches. On land nothing was too trivial for the notice of this mighty wind. It carried tiles off houses. It blew down straw stacks. It banged doors open, and frightened children into fits. It shook new buildings to pieces, and tore trees up by the roots. Now and then there was a rough rollicking humour in its doings. It lifted watchmen off their feet, and set them down again. It shouted down chimneys. It bellowed round corners, and it roused sleepers from their beds with the smashing of glass and the parting of window frames. When it reached Middleton it rested awhile, and took a survey of the place, feeling its way about the narrow streets and round the curious gables, and over the red-tiled pointed house tops; and then it scattered the remnants of night's dark mantle, blew

out the two or three remaining stars, and roared and shouted and raved, and tore up and down the streets and over the houses with maddened glee.

Mr. Martyn grew restless, and complained that the wind affected his head. What cared the wind for that? If ten thousand heads had ached it would not have bated a jot of its rough humour. It shook Mr. Martyn's house, banged at the bedroom windows, whooped up the passage by the side of the counting-house, rushed through the garden, blew the smoke from the factory chimney away into the fields, bounded off over the meadows, made the miller tremble for his house, threw the water over the weir in white clouds of spray, returned, came up the streets of Middleton again, ran away with the caps of men on their way to work, blew the factory girls' petticoats over their heads, knocked down boys who were opening their masters' shops, and made all such signs as those of the "Durham Ox," which hung upon hinges,

creak and groan and yell and scream as though they were in pain.

Thus was a stormy day stormily ushered in. It was in the power of the most relentless and malicious of Mr. Martyn's creditors on this day to remove his goods and chattels and types and machinery to a convenient place of sale, or to sell them on the spot, if prior and proper notice had been given. But no sale had been announced. The few offended public men who wished to put out the *Middleton Star* had no desire that their designs should be made public too soon. Their proceedings had been organised and managed by Zebedee Gripps, a lawyer of Middleton, whose membership of the Zion Chapel, and whose preaching twice a week, and whose religious whinings every day, had not shielded him from the censure of the *Star*, when he had been false to his public trust, though his chapel zeal had assisted him to guide the greater portion of the Charity Trustees' funds into his own pocket. Gripps was determined to make a clean sweep of the *Star*

offices on this stormy day, the more so that Mr. Martyn was in bed, and could not interfere. As ten o'clock was striking, he ascended the printing office stairs, with a compositor from an adjacent town and an auctioneer. Notwithstanding a rushing torrent of indignant remonstrance and inquiry from Mr. Windgate Williams, the auctioneer began to make a note of what he saw, aided by the technical explanations of the strange compositor. Mr. Martyn's men permitted this to go on until a couple of stout labourers made their appearance, and were instructed by Gripps to begin the removal of sundry articles, known as chases and column rules.

"Oh ! this will not do ! the law will not permit it—the thing's illegal—you are bent upon destruction, not upon realising the amount of your just claim, whatever that may be—put down those chases," exclaimed Mr. Williams, who had shuffled and jumped upon the scene, with a bundle of proofs just taken up for correction.

Upon this, Tom Titsy and several other

persons put down their work, and sauntered up to the spot where the editor was disputing with the man of law.

"This is our authority," said Mr. Gripps, exhibiting an official-looking roll of paper.

"I care neither for you nor your authority," said Mr. Williams, closing the office door and locking it. "You shall not stop the publication of this paper to-day—you will destroy the copyright—destroy a valuable property—it shall not be."

"Quite right!" "Hear, hear!" "Just so," cried the printers; while Tom Titsey laid his hand upon the shoulder of one of the stout labourers.

"Remove those articles," said Mr. Gripps,

"Printers!" exclaimed Windgate Williams; "and you more especially, Mr. Overseer," addressing a middle-aged gentleman, who looked exceedingly bewildered: "it is your duty and mine to publish Mr. Martyn's newspaper to-day—no law will sanction the destruction of the copyright of this journal, as these men

maliciously contemplate — laws were not made to minister to the bad passions of human nature, nor to aid a canting hypocrite in satisfying his devil's prayers. If you allow this wickedness to proceed, you are the veriest lot of chicken-hearts that ever stood at cases and followed the glorious profession of Caxton, who wore a sword and was a brave man."

"Put down them traps," said Tom Titsey to one of the stout porters, while the editor was running his fingers wildly through his hair, at the close of his address; "put down them traps."

The porter hesitated, which was unfortunate for him.

"Then go down thyself," said Tom, seizing the chases with one hand, and felling the deputy-bailiff with the other.

"No blows! no blows!" exclaimed Mr. Williams; "let us keep within the law;" but like many a revolutionary orator, Mr. Windgate Williams having raised the storm, found the tempest beyond his control.

When stout porter No. 1 was down, No. 2 showed fight, and there was a general attack in consequence.

The strange compositor was carried to a trough and held there, while a jet of water was turned playfully upon his face.

The auctioneer closed his book and struggled in the arms of a couple of men, who quickly deposited him outside the door, and told him to thank his stars that he had not gone through the window.

Porter No. 2 soon succumbed, and was glad with No. 1 to scramble after the auctioneer. The strange compositor was carried wet and limp to the staircase, and was allowed to slide to the bottom thereof, on his back. Mr. Gripps gesticulated, and roared, and threatened Mr. Williams with transportation for life; and the printers seemed too much delighted with the wordy encounter between the two chiefs to interfere, beyond applauding the sallies of Mr. Williams, and hissing the threats of Gripps the lawyer.

"Sir," at length shouted the editor,

throwing back his loose coat, taking a sort of a hop skip and jump towards Mr. Gripps, and screaming with excitement, “leave this room, sir! leave this room, or I will not answer for the consequences.”

“I’ll have you put in the darkest cell in Middleton lock-up, breaker of the Queen’s peace! murderer of the Queen’s English!” shouted Gripps in reply, and flourishing his roll of official paper, as if it were a marshal’s baton.

This was too much—“murderer of the Queen’s English!”—Mr. Williams could put up with a great deal, but there are bounds to the patience of the most patient and unassuming of men.

“You canting rascal!” shouted the editor, rushing upon Mr. Gripps, and shaking him by the collar, until the marshal’s baton flew over his head, while the legal watch, leaping from the legal pocket, dashed itself against a heavy eye-glass, until both were broken.

“You blaspheming imp of darkness!

you parchment-visaged cackler—you robber of the orphan and plunderer of the poor—you beast, you beast!" went on the maddened editor, shaking the lawyer, until both were panting for breath.

"Hear, hear!" "Bravo, bravo!" "Encore!" "Give it him!" shouted the printers.

At length, by some unlucky mischance, Gripps fastened his fingers in the editorial hair, and the editorial teeth chattered with the violent motion of the bewildered cranium.

Their sympathies being of course more on the side of the editor than with the lawyer, the printers now thought it was time to part the combatants, for just then Mr. Williams was decidedly getting the worst of the encounter. They seized Mr. Gripps, and as he was not inclined to loosen his grip of the editorial locks, Tom Titsy gave him a slight intimation that he must. The hint was given forcibly under the fifth rib, upon which the lawyer released his possession of the head, but not without removing therefrom a large quantity of the

hirsute growth which had thatched that intellectual locality.

"Now, be off, sir," said several voices. "Hook it while you can;" "Take the steps in preference to the window."

Mr. Gripps was wise enough to accept the warning.

"And take your authority with you, you pounce-box, do," shouted Mr. Williams, as he tossed the marshal's baton after him.

Then a council of war was held on both sides. The first command of Mr. Windgate Williams was : "Secure the outer doors ! Fasten the windows ! Let one man cease work and keep guard that he may give warning of danger. They may come in force now—if we can hold out until sundown, we can contrive to get to press, and then the copyright will be secure for another week, by which time fresh arrangements may be made."

In the offices of Mr. Gripps were assembled Mr. Magar and a wronged cabinet-maker, who had wished, as a town councillor, to purchase a piece of corporate land

for a mere song ; a pious currier, who was in the habit of attending the ministrations of the pious lawyer ; and several other members of the clique which objected to the little ray of light that radiated from the *Star* printing office. Gripps described the murderous attack to which he had been subjected, and demanded that the whole affair should now be left entirely in his hands. The meeting cordially assented to this, and broke up, to talk about the strange occurrences of the morning, and to satisfy their small consciences by saying to themselves, " Well, we have left the affair in the hands of our lawyer, and of course we cannot be blamed for what may take place."

An hour afterwards Gripps, followed by a little army of the scum of Middleton—dog stealers, reputed thieves, deputy-bailiffs, and cads of all kinds and classes—entered the counting-house of Mr. Martyn and demanded free admission into the printing office.

Mr. Jennings referred Gripps to Mr.

Windgate Williams, and followed it up by hoping that Mr. Gripps had not suffered much from the striking remarks of the editor.

Seeing that he could obtain no assistance here, the lawyer proceeded with his ragged army to renew the siege of the typographical fortress.

"It is a dangerous game you're playing —have a care; stop this seizure," Jennings wrote on a scrap of paper, and sent it in an envelope to Magar.

Meanwhile Jacob left his father for a short time and proceeded to seek out Mr. Horatio Johnson.

The people stared at Mr. Martyn's son as he passed along the streets. Some knew him and thought he had grown wonderfully proud since he had left the old town. These said, "Ah! pride would have a fall." Others pitied him, said he was a fine fellow, and that it was a sad thing a young man's prospects should be blighted as his were likely to be. Jacob passed along unconscious of these observations,

but nevertheless cognisant of the fact that he was being stared at and criticised.

Half a dozen pigeons were blowing about like bundles of feathers over the thatched cottage of the Titsys as Jacob entered it. When he opened the front door another at the back was slammed with a shock that seemed to make the little house shake to its foundation. The Doctor was taking a morning pipe, and blowing the smoke against the chimney ornaments as usual. He rose when Jacob entered, and looked towards him as if awaiting an explanation of the intrusion. Then all of a sudden he knew Jacob, and his face lighted up with a smile of intense satisfaction.

"The times are out of joint, as the saying is," said Mr. Johnson, after sundry cordial greetings, and inquiries and good wishes and admiring expressions regarding Jacob's improvement, "the times are out of joint, Master Jacob. We shall need all our philosophy—to say nothing of our tobacco—to bear the changes that seem to be coming upon us; but change is a moral

law—a law of nature, a law of society—and we must learn to take things as they come, and with resignation."

Mr. Johnson seated himself as he gave forth these little scraps of philosophy, and tried to look exceedingly contented ; but Jacob could see that he was feigning.

" I have encountered too many troubles in this vale of tears to quarrel with the happiness still left ; and you, Master Jacob, must apply yourself to philosophy. It will triumph over all difficulties and disappointments. And don't forget, if ever you should come to want a friend, that Horatio Johnson will deem it an honour and a pleasure to be commanded by you."

" I am already under an eternal obligation to you, Mr. Johnson, if Mrs. Tetsy stopped the professional draughts and secretly replaced them with your own, as she now avows, when I lay dying years ago," said Jacob, greatly moved at the Doctor's earnest and delicate proffer of assistance.

" No, no, Jacob ; don't thank me.

Nature performed the cure, and your time was not come. There is a divinity doth shape our ends, Jacob, and I was but Fate's minister. If I had not been here ready to his hand, the destiny you have to fulfil would have found another agent. Things must be done regularly and properly, and in a natural manner ; but fate, sir, fate will have its own way."

"Do you not think fate is a hard master sometimes ?" inquired Jacob.

"Truly, truly," said the Doctor ; "but it's not in mortals to say when fate is hard, and when it is kind and merciful ; we must not look at events as they present themselves at the moment, but keep our eye forward into the future. You know what the old song says—

" ' For there's many a dark and cloudy morning
Brings forth a pleasant day.' "

While they were conversing Gripps and his ragamuffin army passed the house. The Doctor went forth to inquire the reason

of the commotion. When he opened the door they had turned the corner of the street, and the wind was howling after them. A small boy was running in the wake of the mob and the gust of wind ; to this juvenile piece of human nature the Doctor addressed himself.

“ Hallo, boy ! what’s the matter ?”

“ The *Middleton Star*, ” shouted the youth, running on, and then in a gasp, which a new gust of wind cut short, he ejaculated, “ Row at Martyn’s.”

Jacob, following the Doctor, heard this, and without another word dashed out into the street, and speedily outstripped the urchin, while the Doctor hastily followed, bethinking himself to carry with him a walking-stick which had hung beneath the clock-case for many a long year. Another important actor in the drama went in the wake of the Doctor. This was our old friend Cæsar, who, less nimble than of yore, had lain beneath the stairs, without condescending even to pay his compliments to Jacob, but had sniffed mischief in

the Doctor's hasty departure and was soon barking at his heels.

They reached Mr. Martyn's establishment just as Gripps had left the counting-house. Jennings informed them of the situation of affairs, and Jacob and the Doctor and Julius Jennings went after the besieging army.

And now, for the first time, Jacob saw the change which had been wrought in his garden. The favourite seat had gone ; he flower-beds had been replaced with grass ; a wide, hard, stony path led up to the printing office—the whole scene so totally different to what it had been that the change only strengthened Jacob's memory of its former beauties.

Mr. Windgate Williams was haranguing the besiegers from the window of the editorial room. He was appealing to the minions of Gripps as working men and lovers of freedom, in whose special interests the *Star* had been established ; he enjoined them to be patient and respect the law. He was throwing back his loose

coat, and running his fingers through his hair, and pouring out a volume of words that seemed to roll over each other and fall in showers upon the heads of those below.

Blackguards as they were, the hired mob who had been bellowing for admission into the printing office evidently did not like the work in which they were engaged, and they did not attempt to interrupt the eloquence of Mr. Windgate Williams.

"This is waste of time," said Gripps at length, flourishing his paper baton, "waste of time, I summon you to open these doors in the name of the law and of its powers which I now hold in my hand."

"If you will give me your word in writing that nothing shall be removed for one week you shall be admitted immediately," said Mr. Williams.

"I will do nothing of the sort, and you may think yourself fortunate if I do not give you into the hands of the police," replied Gripps, in a harsh, crackling voice.

"The object of this attack —"

"I'll hear no more, sir."

"The object, I say, of this ——"

"Open the door, sir," demanded Gripps.

"Hear what he has to say," said Dr. Johnson, coming forward.

"Ay, ay," said several voices. "Let's hear what he's gotten to say."

"The object of this attack is not fairly to satisfy a legal claim, but to ruin Mr. Martyn and destroy his paper."

"Mr. Martyn, who at this moment lies dangerously ill!" said Dr. Johnson, while Jacob held his head down in sorrow and humiliation.

"What have we to do with that?" said a brutal fellow, with a black eye, who was known by his companions as The Bruiser. "What have we to do wi' illness or owt else? law's law, and when a man wants his money, let it be paid; and if it can't, why let's have the traps—that's law!"

"You wretch," exclaimed the editor.

"That *is* law," croaked Gripps, "and here is our authority. There are five shillings for each of you when the work

is done. Now then, burst open those doors!"

"Wait! wait! wait a moment," exclaimed the Doctor, facing half a dozen of the most brutal of the mob who were pressing forward to execute this command; "if it's a matter of money, I'll give you ten shillings each to do nothing of the sort, and a trifle into the bargain if you'll throw this grasping lawyer into the mill-dam yonder."

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob; "hurrah!" Several sticks and hats flew up into the air, and so fickle were the retainers of Gripps that had it not been for the arrival of two constables and the police superintendent there is no knowing what might have become of the besieging chief.

"Here's th' constables," said The Bruiser, "ax them! ax them!"

Mr. Gripps stepped up to the superintendent and explained the case, finally asking if the document he held in his hand did not give him the power to force an entrance into the building and remove its contents.

The superintendent said he believed it did, whereupon Mr. Gripps demanded the assistance of the police; but the superintendent explained that they had no power unless a breach of the peace should be committed; and being satisfied that such would be the case, and having more regard for his own neck and the safety of his men than anything else, the chief of police marched from the scene of the encounter, after giving the mob a general caution not to commit a breach of the peace, and requesting Mr. Gripps to do what he had to do lawfully.

“But you must stay, sir, you must stay,” said Gripps,

“That is my business,” said the superintendent; “I give my countenance to neither side, and my presence is best dispensed with. So men—attention! right about face! march!” and the police disappeared.

“Hurrah!” shouted the mob again.

“Now, my men,” said Gripps, “bailiffs

to the front, and especially those who wish to keep their situations."

"Ay, ay, that's it," said The Bruiser, placing himself at the head of a few resolute-looking fellows who prepared to advance.

"One last word, one last word," shouted the editor from his high place, and by this time sundry other faces appeared at other windows.

"Hear him, hear him," said some of the mob.

"All I have to say is this," began Mr. Williams, deliberately flinging back his coat, as if he were a barrister pleading at the bar, and then raising his right arm as if he were a warrior about to command a charge; "I give you fair warning, I caution you in the name of God and the law, not to enter here; for, by heavens! I swear that the first head which comes through yon doorway might as well be on the block! Dante's Inferno has no more fanciful terrors than the reality shall be for the first man who crosses the portals of the

offices of the *Middleton Star!*" with which threat Mr. Williams banged down the window, and the heads which had been seen in the composing-room simultaneously disappeared.

For a few minutes there was a dead silence.

Mr. Johnson looked at Jacob, who had gradually entered into the excitement of the moment and could not resist a cry of admiration and approval at the gallant bearing of the gentleman whom he had considered rather a bore on the previous night.

"He defies you, he defies you," said Gripps at length; "and here's a young puppy applauding him," turning to Jacob.

"Bridle that tongue," said Dr. Johnson to Gripps, "or I'll tear it from your throat, you pettifogging rascal."

Jacob felt his blood boiling.

"Hear that! hear that! a pretty set of cowards you are," said Gripps, turning his small eyes upon the motley crew: "bullied on both sides—a sovereign for the first man who puts his foot through yon door."

The Bruiser leaped forward at the offer, followed by several others. Jacob's heart beat as though it would burst, when ringing knocks on the door rose above the clamour of discordant voices.

Then there was a crash and a cry, and the besieging host fell back, yelling, down the stone steps before a charge from above.

Windgate Williams had been as good as his word. The Bruiser was bleeding from a wound in the head.

The door was again slammed to, and sounds were heard as if the printers were nailing it up.

Cæsar, hearing Tom's voice, grew terribly excited, barked, and rushed up the steps, and forced itself through the aperture which had been made by the first assault, that had proved so disastrous to Gripps's principal villain.

There was another pause, and if Mr. Windgate Williams had been discreet as well as brave he would not have interrupted it; but he had received an ugly

blow on the nose, and the sight of his own blood overthrew all his self-control.

"You infernal rascals! you scum of a black and ungrateful town! you cowardly miscreants!" he shouted, leaning half way out of the window, "I'll pound you like corn between mill-stones, if you don't disperse."

"Hear that, you cowards!" shouted Gripps; "he'll pound you like flour; you the scum of Middleton; infernal rascals he calls you!"

This was irresistible, Gripps knew how to influence a mob. A second charge was made, and there was a desperate fight—this time within the composing-room, which, by sheer force of numbers, the besiegers entered.

Mr. Johnson and Jacob followed, and succeeded in getting inside the room, where they found the printers, headed by Williams, contesting every step of ground, and using all manner of weapons.

Blood was flowing freely, cases of type were overturned, and in a few moments



several persons were placed *hors de combat*.

At length the printers gave way. The fighting gradually became less furious, and then mutually ceased; whereupon Gripps, who had kept in the background, came to the front, and no sooner did he show himself than Mr. Williams leaped upon him. There were shouts of "Fair play," and "Let them fight it out," and the battle of the two hosts suddenly became an encounter between the two chiefs.

Williams and Gripps tugged at each other and rolled on the floor, and got up and fell down again, until Gripps refused to rise, and cried for mercy, whereupon the victorious editor, exclaiming, "Printers, give in! you are an honour to your country!" mingled among the throng, and disappeared.

Nobody seemed desirous of fighting any longer, and when peace was restored the police once more appeared.

Several persons were seriously hurt. One man's leg was severely lacerated by

the bite of a dog. The Bruiser had sought the infirmary, after the first attack. The compositor from an adjacent town, who had been under the pump an hour or two previously, was carried, insensible, to Dr. Smythe's. Three deputy-bailiffs were much bruised, and black eyes and bleeding noses were general. Tom Titsy was among the latter, and even Dr. Johnson had a confused eye.

The superintendent of police took a note of all this; but he said, as there seemed a legal quibble—a question whether Gripps was not a trespasser—he could not comply with the lawyer's request to apprehend several of Mr. Martyn's men; neither could he take any of the other side into custody. Those who chose to do so might apply for summonses or warrants to the magistrates. He would advise all those who wished for ulterior proceedings to see Squire Northcotes.

When he found his adversary gone, Gripps began to give orders for the removal of the type, directing his first atten-

tion to two pages of the paper which were ready for press.

"These first, these first, you rascal," he exclaimed to one of his leading men ; "give a hand here, give a hand, and on to your heads with them."

"No ! no ! for goodness sake," said Jacob, who had some knowledge of printing, "you will destroy them."

"Stand aside, young prater ; I'm master here."

"Fair words, Gripps," said Jacob, clenching his teeth and his fist at the same time, "or I'll finish the work which Mr. Williams began."

"Braggart ! puppy ! son of a bankrupt," exclaimed Gripps in reply, anxious to have a clear case of assault in the presence of the police.

Jacob had suffered too much already to put up with this open insult. His eyes blazed with fury and indignation ; his right arm struck out, followed by his left, with pugilistic vigour ; and never was man more completely "floored" than Zebedee Gripps,

who lay as quietly after it as if it were pleasant to be knocked down. A constable raised him up, and by signs and gasps Gripps endeavoured to impress everybody with the information that he was very badly hurt, as no doubt he was, taking into consideration all he had undergone during the morning. His first words were a request that the policeman would take Jacob into custody.

The officer said he was sorry to decline, but he must nevertheless—it was a case for a summons ; at the same time, he advised Mr. Gripps not to call names.

“ Come, then, on to your heads with that stuff,” said Gripps to the two men who had each raised a page of the *Middleton Star* which was to have been printed that afternoon. Jacob found that it was useless to remonstrate, and the two men putting their heads beneath the locked-up type, immediately had it all breaking and falling over their shoulders, leaving the iron frames round their necks. From that moment the *Middleton Star* was defunct.





CHAPTER VI.

HOMELESS, HOPELESS, PENNILESS.

HE passing-bell swung to and fro in the church steeple. It was evening. The wind had gone down the river, and had travelled miles and miles away out to sea. Middleton was calm and still. People paused at their suppers to ask who was dead. The bell knocked at Jacob Martyn's heart. He had only one consolation. His father had died utterly oblivious of the humiliating scene which had been enacted on the previous day.

Jacob could not rest in the house. The silence appalled him. He could hardly breathe. He went into the garden. The



factory was a blaze of light. Half a dozen voices were droning forth the old hymn—

“There is a happy land,
Far, far away.”

It was like a dirge—it wailed. The voices seemed tired. The girls had been at work all day. They had begun with the early morning. They sang the words “Far, far away” like a complaint, a protest, a cry, a regret, as if there were no hope in it, but only a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. The wheels and straps and shafts and spindles seemed to catch up the words and whirl them round and round, hurling them finally among the great plunging machines to be crushed and ground out of all shape. The whirling and spinning seemed to get into Jacob’s head; his thoughts went round and round with the flying and flashing wheels. A reminiscence of a certain calm evening with a miller smoking his pipe got mixed up in the general confusion, and he hurried back again into the house of the dead, finding no consolation, no relief, out in the world among the living.



"This is for you," said Mrs. Titsy, handing him a letter and wiping away her tears.

"Did it come by the post?" Jacob asked.

"No, and the boy said that it was very important."

It was a brief note. It simply stated that Squire Northcotes had important business with Jacob Martyn, whom he would expect at his residence at eleven o'clock the next day.

Squire Northcotes was one of the notabilities of Middleton. He was a short gentleman, with a red face, bushy grey hair and whiskers. He usually wore a brown dress-coat with brass buttons, a canary-coloured waistcoat, and grey trousers. Out-of-doors, he generally carried a riding whip. When he went without this emblem of the stable he carried his hands in his pockets, in a swaggering manner. He was always cleanly shaven, and his boots were bright and creaky. He wore a ponderous hunting watch, indicated by a large gold

seal, which drew particular attention to the owner's rotundity of person. Meeting him in the High Street of Middleton-in-the-Water, a stranger might easily have imagined that the Squire had inherited the entire town from a long line of distinguished ancestors. In his magisterial capacity he was a terror to evil-doers; in his private capacity he had been one of Mr. Martyn's fiercest opponents.

"You're a fine young fellow to assault a gentleman, are you not? a very fine fellow," said the Squire, addressing Jacob on the day appointed for the interview. "What have you to say for yourself?"

The little magistrate put his double glasses over his nose, and leaned back in his chair to obtain a full view of the delinquent.

"Am I on my trial, then?" inquired Jacob, a slight blush tinging his otherwise pale cheeks.

"On your trial, sir! I should think you *are* on your trial."

"I hope you will not trifle with me,"

said Jacob, thinking he detected something in Squire Northcote's manner less earnest than a magistrate would be when fulfilling any portion of a justice's duties.

"Trifle with you! *trifle!* not at all," said the magistrate, rising and ringing a bell.

"When did Mr. Gripps say he would call again about those warrants?" he inquired, on his summons being answered.

"At half-past eleven," said an apoplectic flunkey.

"Very well; when he comes, let him wait."

"And why am I called here, sir? Pray do not keep me in suspense, whatever the business may be," said Jacob, as the man disappeared.

"Suspense—it will be *suspension* for you" (the Squire chuckled at his own joke) "if you go on attacking gentlemen in the performance of their duty. Suspense indeed," and then the Squire put his hands into his pockets, and rattled his gold and silver until it seemed to repeat as plainly as possible, "Suspense indeed!"

"*Gentlemen!*" repeated Jacob, contemptuously. "But I do not wish to have any discussion. If you cannot inform me, at once, what your business is with me I must go home."

Jacob spoke with a sad, hopeless expression, that touched the Squire despite his brusque nature.

"Well then, be seated, Mr. Valiant," said the magistrate. "I have an application from Mr. Zebedee Gripps for warrants against yourself and others for assaults."

"Yes, sir," said Jacob, waiting for further information.

"Well, does not that make you feel frightened? doesn't it alarm you—eh?" said the Squire, evidently surprised at Jacob's coolness.

"No," said Jacob, in desperation; "is it to frighten me that you have been good enough to send for me here?"

"Why, what a fierce young fellow you are! Really I begin to think I shall do wrong to—Dear me! dear me! why, you might be a poacher, or a burglar, instead

of what you appear to be, with your curt answers and defiant bearing," said Squire Northcotes, annoyed that he had not succeeded in awing Jacob into a terrible fright.

"I always had reason to entertain a poor opinion of you, sir," said Jacob, rising and taking up his hat, "but now you sink lower than ever in my estimation."

"Sir!" exclaimed the Squire. "You *impudent* rascal! I simply meant to frighten you; but, by Jove! I don't know but what Gripps is right after all!"

"A brave thing," continued Jacob, without noticing the Squire's remarks, "is it not, to take part with scoundrels in the wreck and destruction of an honest man's home, and then to triumph over his son, and try to frighten him while his father lies dead?"

"Stop! Stop! Dear, dear me! dear me! poor fellow! there, there, sit down." The Squire seized Jacob by the arm, and thrust him into the chair which he had just vacated.

"You wrong me; you do indeed. Dear

me ! what a *sad* thing ! Dead, do you say ? How is it I did not know ? As if it were not enough to have the bailiffs in the place, let alone— Dear me ! Why, what an infernal hard-hearted devil !— ahem !—I must be, to torture the lad in this manner. Dear, dear ! why, it's cruelty to animals. Damme ! I deserve a month on the treadwheel.” With which emphatic comment upon his own conduct, the Squire walked about the room, and rattled his gold and silver, which repeated his last pungent remark as plainly as gold and silver could possibly do.

Jacob looked up in astonishment, and when there was a slight pause in the Squire's movements, he essayed to speak.

“ Don't speak, sir ; not a word, not a word. I'm a homicide, sir, a homicide—a murderer of the innocents ; I'm a wretch,” went on the Squire, twitching at his coat collar, and throwing his little head about in the wildest state of excitement.

Indeed, there is no knowing to what extent his contempt for himself might not

have gone had not the corpulent individual before mentioned knocked at the door, thrust his head inside, and ejaculated "Gripps."

The Squire caught at the word with the eagerness with which it is said drowning men desire to seize upon straws. "Gripps, Gripps!" The magistrate darted out of the room ; and immediately afterwards, Jacob heard a great deal of talking in the hall. The conversation was very noisy, and all on one side. There were few words, however, that he could detect, save "dearme" and "damme;" and the Squire made such frequent use of both, that it would have puzzled a much cleverer fellow than Jacob to decide when the Squire's exclamation was "dearme" and when it was something else, the words were so singularly blended, and were used so frequently.

By-and-by the Squire returned, somewhat consoled by his interview with Gripps, to whom he had transferred all the epithets and reproaches which he had hitherto applied to himself.

"Dear me, I flattered myself I knew something; I thought I was rather a man of the world."

The discovery that he had somehow or other made a mistake in this was a blow to the Squire's vanity, which fretted him almost as much as it did to think that he had been acting cruelly towards one who had so much right to find sympathy and kindness.

"Well, sir," he said at length, "you need fear no trouble from Gripps: I'll see that *you* are safe at any rate."

"Thank you, sir," said Jacob.

"Don't thank me; no words about that; but tell me what you are going to do! what are your prospects in life?"

"I do not know," said Jacob.

"No, no—of course not; cannot think about it until the funeral is over: that's the feeling of a good son; well, well—I know, I know. But look here, now" (the gold and silver rattled, and then several gold pieces came forth). "Look here, now, you may have use for this; there, take it; it

isn't a gift ; I'll lend it to you ; I've no use for it ; I shall only throw it away—come, come."

But Jacob declined.

"I do not need it at present, sir ; I am greatly obliged to you."

The Squire was hurt at Jacob's refusal, but nothing would induce him to take the money.

"Very well, I regard it as false pride ; but never mind," said the Squire ; "perhaps you are right ; this, however, you must do—let me know when you do require it, that's all."

Jacob thanked the Squire, and was shown to the door by the magistrate himself,

"Humph ! he's a proud young fellow—like his father," said the Squire, ringing the bell for his sherry and biscuits. "As it happened, it turned out well for a time, but I've been sorry ever since for that row I had with poor Martyn : dear me, it's a pity he wasn't a Red."

"Dear me, it's a pity he wasn't a Red,"

said the agitated gold and silver. There was no mistake about it. Whenever the Squire wished to be very emphatic he shook up sundry coins of the realm, including two old guineas which were always domiciled in those ample pockets, until they repeated, as plainly as possible, the words upon which he laid the gold and silver emphasis.

A week after this interview between Jacob and the magistrate, a vault in the Middleton Churchyard was opened that the body of Alfred Martyn might rest in company with the remains of his wife and Jacob's little brother. The establishment of the late Mr. Martyn was closed; great placards were posted upon the shutters announcing a sale by auction. The windows in the upper rooms were dirty, the blinds had disappeared altogether, and "To Let" was daubed on the panes, in white letters. The garden was strewn with scraps of paper, fragments of straw, broken packing-cases, and pieces of rope. All that remained to remind those who knew

Jacob's paradise in its sunny days, was the factory music, the noise of the distant river, and voices from over the wall. But of these only the river was unchanged. Joy, nor sorrow, nor death altered the gurgling, rippling, rumbling river, as it fell from the mill-pool, tumbling over the stones, leaping, and splashing, and rushing through gulleys, and then going on quietly to the sea.

Jacob Martyn was alone in the world, friendless, homeless, and an orphan. He had received only one letter from Lucy. It was a short, sweet, simple letter. In reply, Jacob told her he was lost. He loved her with all his heart, but he would not bind her to her vows. He released her; for he was a beggar, a broken-hearted, helpless, penniless beggar. Fortune was against him. The world was a delusion, life a curse, hope a snare. He should always love her nevertheless, but he would not darken her life with the shadow of his. If ever he should be successful; if ever fortune did smile upon him; and she were free to be his and still cared for him, he

would be at her feet. Until then he would wait, and fight, and strive, even without hope, to conquer the demon misfortune who was in full possession of him. He wrote letters equally desponding to Spen ; and then slipped away from Middleton-in-the Water ; slipped away over that bridge in the shadow of which we found him at play in our opening chapter ; slipped away entirely, and for a long time was not heard of again.





CHAPTER VII.

HOW A FAMOUS BANQUET WAS BROUGHT TO
A SUDDEN AND STARTLING END.



HEN we are gone the world soon forgets us. The ranks close up and we are not missed. If we could not console ourselves with the thoughts of the world beyond, the idea of death would be enough to drive us mad.

Middleton-in-the-Water showed no change on account of the removal of Mr. Martyn. A new name was cut on the old tomb-stone that stood up among the hard, formal-looking monuments in the churchyard. That was all. Middleton even existed without Mr. Martyn's newspaper. It went on buying and selling and cursing and swearing

and robbing just the same. The smoke dragged itself up and down the streets and the river rolled under the bridge as of yore. When Mr. Windgate Williams shook the accursed dust of the town from off his feet, and travelled fourth class by train to another city, no startling phenomenon marked the incident. Jacob Martyn was not missed. The old Squire, jingling his money, had thought of him once, and the Titsy household kept his memory green ; but Middleton put its shutters up at night and turned down its gas without a thought of the wanderer.

Soon after the eclipse of the *Star*, the opposition journal, now in undisturbed possession of the field, was "glad to learn," in a very jubilant paragraph, "that arrangements were at last completed for the proposed banquet to his Worship the Mayor, Ephraim Magar, Esq., who has for three successive years fulfilled the onerous and important duties of the chief magistracy. On Tuesday next the burgesses will testify their appreciation of his great services to



the town by entertaining the retiring Mayor at a public dinner, to be provided by our worthy townsman, the landlord of the ‘Durham Ox,’ and we doubt not that the demonstration will be equal to the occasion. Without for one moment desiring to introduce politics into this matter, we cannot close our remarks without congratulating the Reds that the retiring Mayor is on the right side, and we hope this fact will be duly remembered.”

I do a section of the inhabitants some injustice. The “Yellows” had not quite forgotten Mr. Martyn. When they read the desire of the *Guardian* that politics should not be introduced into the Magar demonstration, the Yellows gave a unanimous sigh for the *Star* that had ceased to shine. They little thought how completely they would be revenged before the banquet was ended. Fate is always at our elbows.

As the eventful Tuesday approached, the bustle and excitement of the chief hotel grew loud and noisy. The landlord had engaged a numerous staff of super-

numerary waiters. The corps had been inspected by their chief and lectured upon their duties. A greengrocer, a scavenger, an ostler, a baker, and a score of other artists had begged and borrowed black coats and white neckties for the occasion. They were strictly enjoined not to hand dishes over the heads of guests nor to leave the posts severally assigned to them, except to assist in the removal of the various courses. They were not to pocket the tarts nor to carry away the wine until the dinner was over. One man to eight guests was the proportion of waiting power decided upon by the chief, who was to be assisted by the footman attached to the establishment of Squire Northcotes ; while the Middleton bellman, done up in red and blue, with brass buttons, was to play the part of toastmaster and stand behind the Mayor's chair until the conclusion of the banquet.

Before sunrise on the morning of the feast the gardens of Squire Northcotes and other gentlemen in the neighbourhood

were, with the full permission of their several owners, ransacked for the purposes of decoration. The dining-room was wreathed with holly, fir, and laurel. Shrubs and branches of trees were crowded into every corner of the room, relieved by paper rosettes and ribbons. Some local expert, whose name was ever remembered by the decorators as the author of a great achievement, planned and arranged and formed "Welcome All" with laurel leaves, everlasting flowers, and holly berries. The magic words were stretched across the room behind the chairman's seat. "The Town and Trade of Middleton," in white letters pasted upon red glazed calico, gleamed forth, at the opposite end, from beneath a ponderous wreath of Middleton foliage.

When the tables were laid to the satisfaction of the head waiter a few fortunate persons were permitted to inspect the room. The female servants of the establishment, the wives of six of the supernumerary waiters, the bellman's daughter,

the barber from round the corner, and Mr. Magar's chief domestic went into raptures over the display of plate and glass and flags and mottoes.

The room certainly looked festive and inviting. Two long tables occupied the centre of the apartment, crossed at one end by another slightly raised above the rest, and on this table were displayed the best plate and glass. The borrowed knives and forks were placed upon the lower tables. On the upper table there was no mixture of dinner services. The plates and centre dishes were all of one pattern, and so were the tumblers and wine-glasses. This was considered to be a great triumph of arrangement. The waiting staff at the head table had been doubled, while the wine for the chief guests who were to sit there was specially selected. The next great exhibition for the sightseers was certain artistic models of flowers with which some of the dishes were to be adorned.

"This way," said the chief waiter, who was stout, bald, and hot. The admiring

group followed him down stairs, all marvelling at his fine black suit, except the barber, who was lost in calculating the proportions of a wig which had been exhibited on a wooden block in his window since the first day when he put out his pole with the gilt termination. He felt sure that a little manipulation would adapt the wig to the bald head before him, and resolved to wait upon his friend on the following day with a view to business. Meanwhile the chief waiter led the way into a pantry, close by the kitchen, and there produced two dishes full of birds, roses, stars, diamonds, and leaves, cut out of turnips and carrots, and covered with water to keep them fresh.

“Beautiful!” said a chorus of voices.

“Like wax,” said Mr. Northcotes’ housekeeper.

“Like natur,” said the charwoman.

They all agreed that the chief waiter was a wonderful man.

“But to think of them bein’ stuck on boiled mutt’n an’ caper sarse—I cudn’t eat

for lookin' at 'em," said the wife of one of the supers.

And then each woman (except the servants in the house, who had only time "just to have one peep") went and told every other woman she knew all she had seen ; and the barber, after another mental calculation, went straight to his old wig-block and wondered if it really *would* fit the waiter's head.

When the guests arrived they were ushered into the smoke-room, the bar and commercial room, until the announcement of dinner.

For ten minutes two "commercials" looked inkstands and daggers and fire-irons at the head of every fresh comer, and then disappeared, denouncing this intrusion upon their sacred apartment. The bar, I must not forget to say, was occupied by those who considered themselves the leading burgesses ; and here the most proficient waiters relieved every gentleman of his hat and overcoat, which were exchanged for small round



tickets, numbered with very bloated figures.

At length there was a sound of carriage wheels, followed soon afterwards by a loud shout. The uproar was first raised by a crowd of shivering men and boys, who stood outside the hotel sniffing the odours of the kitchen. Three waiters took up the cry, which was immediately repeated by the smoke-room and echoed by the commercial, reaching its climax with the bar. The reason for this jubilation was the arrival of his Worship the Mayor (Ephraim Magar, Esq.), leaning on the arm of Squire Northcotes, who accepted the ovation with becoming grace, the Squire looking through everybody as if occupied with some important sight a long way off. The Mayor bowed his humble acknowledgments for this kindness, which, he said, as plainly as looks could speak, "is really more than I deserve. I am a plain outspoken man, and I have only done my duty." But his admiring fellow-townsmen would not permit this self-depreciation. The more his Wor-

ship shook his head and bowed the louder they shouted ; and if during a brief lull in the tumult of applause dinner had not been announced, there is no knowing whether speech-making might not have begun before the banquet.

Squire Northcotes and the Mayor led the way to the dining-room, followed by no fewer than one hundred of the gentry and tradesmen of the town, in order, according to their position or conceit. The tradesmen permitted professional people and gentlefolks to pass first ; then came the manufacturers and wholesale traders, who elbowed each other fiercely, while the struggle for precedence among the retail people was tremendous.

On all sides the air was filled with the odour of boiling and baking and roasting, and the scorching of japanned plate warmers. Anybody could have sworn to the latter ; and there was no mistaking the odoriferous breezes that came down the yard from the stables, and held a contest with the steam from the kitchen. The

result was by no means appetising. The scent was altogether a peculiar blend, as peculiar as that mixture which was known at the "Durham Ox" as sherry.

These gastronomic and horsey vapours were to some extent dispelled by the musical breezes of the Middleton brass band, which was stationed in the yard to give a classical sensation to the dinner. They were to play a selection of pieces appropriate to the occasion. They began with the "National Anthem," in which the loyalty of the drummer was made strikingly manifest; while the powers of a cornet player, and one who blew out his cheeks and fastened his lips deep into the mouth-piece of an ophicleide, were exemplified in a rivalry for the lead, which was peculiarly effective. Occasionally the cornet would give signs of weakness that were not to be resisted by the ophicleide, which upon these occasions made a dash at the air, and carried it off into a high discordant warble that excited the drummer into such "pitches in," and worried the cornet so successfully,

that nothing could exceed the energy of these three instruments. "The Roast Beef of Old England" awoke the echoes of the stables, and set several of the crowd of lookers on dancing, while great dishes of meat were carried out, steaming hot. Just as the last dish was being conveyed in great state past the musicians, the trombone executed a movement which, though not set down for him, proved highly entertaining to the crowd. Everybody knows that the trombone requires much more space than other instruments, the perpetual drawing in and pushing out of a portion of the machine requiring a considerable area. The Middleton trombone was a very celebrated one, and the player had been originally selected because of his long arms. The performer prided himself upon a certain lower note which was produced at arm's length, and he was just on the point of adding to the effect of the general harmony by the production of this fundamental groan, when Master Super staggered a little out of his course, and caught the end



of the brass instrument in a very sensitive part of his body—namely, the funny bone of his right arm—and down went a huge joint of beef, in a glorious splash of gravy, that spoiled the bearer's borrowed trousers, and for the time being brought the music to an end, while the hungry populace roared with malicious laughter.

But the *élite* of the neighbourhood and the gentry and tradesmen of Middleton, as the local reporter styled the assemblage in the dining-room, never missed this trifle of beef, though they drank and ate everything before them, one gentleman taking caper sauce with apple tart, and another having commenced dinner with the custards and jellies. So much meat and so many clean plates had never before been seen all at one time by the Middletonians,

One often hears about the heat of battle; the heat of a public dinner in a country town is something equally palpable. Of course every window was kept carefully closed. Indeed it was impossible to open them. They were covered with flags and

flowers, with mottoes in calico and sentiments in leaves. Clouds of candles made the air luminous, and a dozen gas jets burnt it. The heat condensed itself and covered the decorations with trickling streams of water. It glowed and danced on the ceiling; it fired the blood of the guests, settling on their faces, making their eyes sparkle. The door was opened, but without relief. The heat was a great success.

Ephraim Magar was ubiquitous. He took wine with everybody. Squire Northcotes was never more condescending. He rattled his money, and even went so far as to patronise a retail flour dealer, who was in such a hurry to respond to the Squire's challenge, and was so nervous and excited, that he filled his glass with a piquant sauce from a bottle that stood in dangerous proximity to the sherry; and determined that he would do full honour to the Squire, he tossed off the pungent draught and at once made such extraordinary faces at his opposite neighbours, accompanied with so many

dangerous symptoms of choking, that he was carried out into the open air to recover.

“ Gentlemen,” said the Squire, rising behind a mutilated haunch of venison, “ Mr. Magar desires me to say that he wishes to invite you to take champagne with him—(hurrah and cheers)—and to enable you to do so, he has given orders for an ample supply—(hurrah)—to be brought into the room instanter”—(tremendous applause).

When the cheese had been removed, and the last scrunching of celery was heard, a tall gentleman in a white neck-cloth rose for the purpose, it was generally believed, of “saying grace.” He opened his mouth twice and nodded his head significantly at three wax candles ; but being young, nervous, and thin, he could do no more. Happily, the assemblage was considerate. Taking the will for the deed, everybody was perfectly satisfied with the pious and proper exercises of the bashful curate. The Mayor of Middleton said

"Amen" in a loud voice, and cracked the first walnut of the day.

"And now, gentlemen, we come to the toast of the evening," said the Squire, after having duly proposed those toasts which, in every assemblage of Englishmen, as every proposer, before and since Squire Northcotes, has said, are always drunk with loyal enthusiasm—"The toast of the evening." (Tremendous cheers).

This leading toast was, of course, the health of Mr. Ephraim Magar, Mayor of the ancient borough of Middleton-in-the-Water. The Squire said all that could be said about Mr. Magar and his office, and the toast was drunk with musical honours :

"Which nobody can deny,
Which nobody can deny,
For he's a hearty good Mayor,
For he's a hearty good Mayor,
For he's a hearty good Mayor,
And so say all of us."

The town-crier had a particular formula as toastmaster when musical honours were

introduced. The first “hip, hip, hurrah” at an end, the crier, raising his hand for silence, desired to ask the assemblage an important question. Everybody knew what the question would be. They smiled and nodded at each other and waited.

“Gentlemen,” said the crier, in slow, solemn tones ; “why do we drink his health ?—why do we drink the health of his Worship the Mayor ?”

“Because he’s a jolly good fellow,
Because he’s a jolly good fellow,
Because he’s a jolly good fellow—
With a hip, hip, hurrah !”

thundered out the Middletonians.

It was one of the chief incidents of a merry evening to hear the toastmaster propound this question.

When Mr. Magar rose to reply, the shouts and cheers were repeated, and by a preconcerted signal the band stationed in the yard struck up, “See the conquering hero comes,” so that the Mayor was compelled to resume his seat, and submit to “more musical honours.”

Only a few bars of the stirring music had, however, been performed, when it was interrupted by a disturbance on the stairs. The conquering hero *was* coming, with a vengeance! A woman's voice was heard, in remonstrance with persons who were evidently trying to prevent her entrance into the room.

"I must! I will! it is life and death!"

Then the waiters could be heard thrusting the woman back.

"Are you men?" she shrieked. "Murder has been done! Let me pass, I say!"

The next moment she had broken through those who resisted her and was in the room. Her appearance seemed to act like a spell on the company. Pale, haggard, defiant, her eyes glaring, she walked to the head of the table. No one attempted to interfere with her. She carried authority in her gait. The Mayor was observed to clutch the tablecloth and gasp for breath. In a moment, however, he had recovered himself.

"Ephraim Magar," said the woman, in

the midst of a dead silence, "I denounce you as the murderer of Silas Collinson."

"Remove this woman!" said the Mayor, addressing the town-crier and the Squire's footman, who stood aghast at her effrontery.

"Hands off!" exclaimed the woman.

"Remove her—she is mad!" shouted the Mayor, who had risen to his feet at her first attack.

"Gentlemen, a moment; hear me a moment," she said with touching earnestness; "most of you knew Silas Collinson—he has been foully murdered, and by that man! I am Susan Harley, who went to America to marry a man that lay murdered at Magar's Mill."

At this moment several persons left their seats and crowded about the Mayor. One of them crept away into the street; that man was Julius Jennings.

"Susan Harley is dead," shouted the Mayor. "This woman is a lunatic. Gentlemen, will you permit your chief magistrate to be insulted, and at a moment like the present?"

"Turn her out," shouted several voices ; "take her back to the asylum." The town - crier laid his hand on Susan's shoulder.

"Silence!" cried Squire Northcotes, who up to this moment had been an astonished spectator of the scene ; "I command silence!"

"Away with her!" roared Magar, his face livid with rage ; "away with the crazy hussy!"

He rushed towards her, with the evident intention of himself ejecting her from the room.

"Hands off!" said a stout young fellow, who had forced his way with some others into the room, on hearing the commotion from the street. "I'll take care of thee, lass, again all comers."

It was Tom Titsy, at the sound of whose voice Susan uttered a cry of joy and flung herself into his arms. Tom held her bravely, and patted her head with his great rough hand.

"Mister Magar doesn't treat the charge

as if it were such a lie, your Honour,' said Tom, addressing the Squire.

"Hold your tongue!" said the Squire, through whose mind the same thought was passing.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" exclaimed the Squire; "pardon me a moment. Mr. Magar, pray be quiet an instant."

"Order! order!" cried twenty voices.

"This woman has placed a paper in my hands; allow me a moment to read it; the print is small."

The Squire examined the paper through his glass during continued cries of "Order, order!"

"I will not submit to this infernal humbug any longer," said Magar.

"Pray be calm," said the Squire, "the affair will soon be at an end. Here is the Superintendent."

As the chief of the borough police entered the room, Susan Harley, overcome by fatigue and excitement, fainted. Tom carried her into the yard.

"Mr. Superintendent," said the Squire,

in a loud magisterial voice, which hushed the bystanders, “ Ephraim Magar is your prisoner, on the charge of murder.”

The officer looked from one to the other in amazement.

“ Monstrous !” exclaimed Magar, his voice trembling. “ I am chief magistrate of Middleton—arrest me at your peril.”

As the officer advanced towards Magar, there were indications of disapprobation among the company.

“ No, no !” said several voices.

“ Gentlemen, fellow townsmen !” said the Squire, with an authoritative wave of his right hand, “ let us obey the law as honest Englishmen ; never let it be said there is a law for the rich and another for the poor. If Mr. Magar is innocent he has his remedy, and we shall be all delighted to see him come out of this, clear, and in a manner worthy of his office.”

“ Hear, hear,” said the Middletonians, “ that is true.”

The Mayor had lost his self-possession by this time. He was trembling in every

limb. His lips were white. He leaned against the table for support.

"Officer, do your duty," said the Squire.
"I will hold you harmless."

"You are my prisoner," said the chief, laying his hand on Magar's shoulder.

"You shall pay for this," was all Magar could say, his teeth chattering with fear.

Half an hour afterwards Ephraim Magar, Esquire, thrice Mayor of Middleton, was a prisoner in the strongest cell of the local lock-up.





CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH SUSAN TELLS HER TERRIBLE
STORY,

“**P**OOR dear soul ; why, I should not ha’ known you,” said Mrs. Titsy to Susan Harley, who sat in Dr. Johnson’s easy-chair, supported by several pillows.

“ I dare say not,” said Susan feebly.

“ Dear, dear, what must ha’ been the sufferings thou’s gone through !”

“ Poor lass ! poor lass !” said Tom Titsy, while Cæsar insinuated his nose between Susan’s hand and knee.

“ To think of the poor dear fellow being murdered ! It gives me the shivers ! Well, I never did like that Magar.”



"Mother!" exclaimed Tom, "don't say that, it's just what everybody will say: and besides I've heard you stand up for him."

"Be quiet, Tom," replied Mrs. Titsy; "let Susan tell us all about it."

Susan sat gazing into the fire, while Tom's big rough dog blinked his eyes at her.

"Do you feel strong enough, Susan, lass, to talk to us? If not, thou knows we can wait."

"Yes, yes," said Susan, looking into Tom's face with a kindly expression and motioning him to a chair.

"I saw Magar when I was in Liverpool."

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Titsy, smoothing her apron and preparing to become an attentive listener.

"I did not think so until lately; but I know now that it must have been him. He was disguised, and talking to a bad-looking man who came on board as a passenger."

"Don't fluster yourself, lass," said Tom.

"That man was engaged to push me overboard."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Mrs. Titsy.

"I know now that he was, though I did not know it then."

Tom set his teeth, and wished he had the scoundrel by the throat.

"He spoke to me more than once in a friendly way, pointed out to me the Welsh coast, and told me when we were passing Cape Clear. He was a blear-eyed, ill-looking man, but he tried to make himself agreeable—for the purpose, no doubt, of putting me into the sea."

"Damn him!" said Tom, half rising from his seat.

"There now, do be quiet," said Tom's mother, "and don't let us hear such language as that when we should be saying our prayers and thanking Heaven for this deliverance."

"We had a pleasant passage until we caught sight of land, which they said was the shore of Long Island; but here the ship tossed a good deal, and the man I tell

you of was continually close to me. He wanted me to look over the side to see some dolphins."

Tom could not keep his seat.

"When we were just entering New York Bay he got more friendly than ever. It was evening. The sea was smoother, but the ship seemed to roll a good deal. The pilot had come on board, and some of the sailors had just before been lowered in a boat—I don't know what for. It was getting dusk, and I went to the side of the vessel to see more distinctly a sight which the man I tell you of said I should never forget. I stood upon a coil of ropes. Suddenly the vessel gave a great lurch, and I felt as if I were lifted off my feet and pushed over."

"Lord have mercy on us!" exclaimed Mrs. Titsy. "And did you go into the water?"

"No; thank God! The boat which had been lowered was going to be used again shortly, and was only partly drawn up the vessel's side."

"Capital!" said Tom, rubbing his hands, "and you fell into it?"

"I did," said Susan, "and was not much hurt. When I got on deck again there was a noise between the man I tell you of and a sailor. The man was taking his oath he did not do it. The sailor asked me if the fellow hadn't pushed me. I said I thought not, and I did think not. The man said he had tried to save me. The sailor said he could almost swear the brute pushed me over; but as I took his part, the row ended in the sailor swearing a good deal, and advising me to keep clear of the fellow, which I did. The next day, an hour before we landed, he was taken into custody for a gold robbery in Liverpool. The police had followed him in a steamer which must have passed us during the night, and the detective came on board in the bay."

"And didn't you think, then, that he had pushed you, Susan, lass?" inquired Tom.

"No! why should he wish to harm me?

I have thought so since. I know now that he was engaged to do so. I am sure of it."

"Have you ever seen him since?" Mrs. Titsy asked.

"Never."

"Should you know him again?"

"Amongst a thousand," Susan replied.

"Well, go on, lass—about the landing?" said Tom.

"I looked for Silas," went on Susan in an undertone. "You may be sure I did not know what to do when I could not find him. I made inquiries. I mentioned the address which Magar had given me. There was no address in his letters, because he had moved about so much, he said, and I was to direct to the post-office. Nobody knew the address. I was half mad. People were running and pushing about. It was all I could do to keep my luggage. At last I told a good-natured looking woman my troubles, and by her advice I was taken to an hotel, and the next day I put an advertisement in a newspaper. I wandered about half the night, near where

the ferry-boat from the vessel landed the passengers ; but no Silas, no Silas."

Susan's voice faltered, and she hid her face in her hands. Tom stole up to her chair and laid his hand gently upon her shoulder.

" There, there, my lass, don't give way ; there, there," said Tom.

" Have a little drop of something warm," said Mrs. Titsy, rummaging among some bottles in the oak corner cupboard and mixing a decoction of which Susan was induced to sip.

" Nowhere could I find him. I could not sleep night nor day. I could not believe he had deserted me."

" No, lass, he wouldn't have done that, wouldn't Silas ; I'll say that for him," said Tom.

" The advertisement did no good. The police did no good. The post-office did no good. Days went on, weeks, months. I could do nothing. At last my money was gone ; and, the Lord forgive me ! I began to think I had been duped ; for why,

or for what, I could not imagine. But Mrs. Gompson said I should be. I thought of that. I remembered, too, what Magar had told me about Silas being a beggar, and in his power."

"When did he tell thee that, lass?" inquired Tom.

"I never heard that before," said Mrs. Titsy.

"No, you would not. I told nobody; but I wished to go all the more for that. At last I thought Silas was ruined, as Magar said, and that he was ashamed to meet me, or that he had done something wrong; I thought a thousand things. I often sat down to write to you all; but my pride would not let me. I could not bear it to be said I had been deceived. People shook their heads and warned me when I went away; I could not bear the triumph they would have in knowing that they had prophesied right; I should have had no pity."

"Susan, Susan, *no* pity," said Mrs. Titsy, reproachfully.

"Yes, yes, from you ; and *yours* I could not bear. Oh, Tom ! have you forgiven me ?"

This appeal to Tom fairly brought tears into his eyes. He took Susan's wasted hand in his and kissed it; after which he was obliged to go to the door and pretend to release a pigeon from his capacious pocket. When he returned Susan continued her story.

"My feelings would not let me write. I prayed for you all, and at last resigned myself to my fate. I went out to service ; I lost two places because I was not cheerful. Whenever I had a holiday I wandered about looking for Silas. Christmas days were the hardest to me. I thought my heart would break many a time. By-and-by I grew more resigned, and after being two years in two places, I got with an English family who kept a store, and there I lived more peacefully and contentedly."

"And did you never get any letters from us ?" asked Mrs. Titsey.

“Never.”

“What a plot it is! what a plot it is!” said Tom.

“One day, when I had begun to be a little more like myself, I thought I would paper out a trunk that I had at poor Mr. Martyn’s. I got a London newspaper which master sometimes received, and then the awful light burst upon me.”

“There, gently, lass, gently,” said Tom, noticing Susan’s growing excitement.

“I noticed the word ‘Middleton,’ and I read it till my brain was on fire. I was nearly mad. I raved. Oh! don’t be afraid, Mrs. Titsy—mother—for you have been a mother to me, ungrateful that I am. Don’t be alarmed, Tom. It is all over now. There, you see, I am quite calm again. Read that.”

Mrs. Titsy took from Susan a carefully preserved though soiled extract from a newspaper, and read as follows:—

“EXTRAORDINARY DISCOVERY: SUSPICIOUS AFFAIR.—Our readers will remember

that some time since it was decided by the county authorities to widen and rebuild Middleton Bridge. The increased traffic along the London road, consequent upon the gradual opening up of the great coal fields of Tipwell, had rendered the bridge unsafe, and on the recommendation of the Bridge Committee, and in consideration of the voluntary assistance of some of the wealthy inhabitants of Middleton, it was resolved to purchase a large piece of land on either side for the purpose of widening the bridge and making a handsome structure worthy of the borough and county too. Mr. Alderman Magar for some time strenuously opposed the scheme ; but when he found how strongly the burgesses were in favour of it, and how handsomely some of them had offered to subscribe towards it, he liberally came forward and made the authorities a present of his famous old corn mill, which at the outset they had proposed to purchase at £3,000, being determined to obtain an Act of Parliament, if necessary, to compel owners of property on either side to consent to the proposed improvement. We have previously expressed our high

sense of Mr. Magar's liberality, which is duly appreciated by the town. Let us not further wander from the subject in hand. On Monday last, when the masons were removing the last stones of the old mill, a labourer struck his axe upon what appeared to be a vault. Some few Roman coins had been found in the course of the work, and the labourer, thinking he had come upon something still more valuable, said nothing of his imaginary good luck except to an old friend, and they agreed to open the vault after the other labourers left work. Their horror and disappointment may be imagined when we state that a ghastly skeleton of a man was the result of their secret search. The body had evidently been interred in quick-lime. There was a terrible fracture on the skull, and medical examination goes to prove that the remains are those of a full-grown man, who had evidently been foully murdered. There were no clothes nor linen found; but a ring or galvanic hoop was afterwards discovered with the letter 'H' upon it. The medical authorities cannot agree as to how long these bones have been lying there. Dr. Smythe is of opinion that they have been

interred upwards of fifty years ; while Mr. Jones, surgeon, thinks they have not been buried more than ten years. The affair has created a great deal of sensation. Some of the oldest inhabitants in the borough remember the mysterious disappearance of a townsman about thirty years ago ; but at present no further light has been thrown upon the affair. The mill has been in the possession of Mr. Alderman Magar for about fifteen years, prior to which the late Mr. Smithson had it for more than half a century. Mr. Magar has himself offered a reward of £50 to any person who can identify the body or give conclusive evidence as to the murderer. On Tuesday evening an inquest was held on the remains, when evidence bearing out the above facts was adduced. The jury returned a verdict of 'Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.' The police are using strenuous efforts to fathom this horrible mystery. It is to be hoped that persons who have relatives missing will communicate with the police. We trust that through the publicity which will be given to the case by the press the murdered man will be avenged. We have some hopes that

the ring may prove to be of more importance than the jury seemed inclined to accord to it. Every effort should be used, at any rate, to find the party who sold the ring. ‘Murder will out,’ and justice will claim the guilty sooner or later.”—*Middleton Star.*

Susan sobbed while Mrs. Titsy read, though every word had long been impressed upon her memory.

“Can you wonder at my feelings on reading that paragraph? It was my own ring they found. Silas took it from my finger the week before he was to have gone to America.”

“Well, by gum! Dear me! What a world it is!” exclaimed Tom, striding up and down the kitchen, and then stopping suddenly before Susan. “I set that bit of news up myself. It was the first paragraph as I ever did put into type all through. By gum! And to think as I was tracking the murderer all the time. Why it’s enough to make one daft to think on it!”

“And to think of that Magar,” said Mrs. Titsy.

"You used to like him, mother," said Tom with the ~~finest~~ symptom of a ~~reproach~~ in his manner.

"Never, Tom—how can you say so?" replied Mrs. Tetsy.

"Well, no matter, mother, we are all ~~grieved~~ about him now; and that psalm-singing thief, Jennings, must have had a hand in it."

"That is true," said Mrs. Tetsy, "for don't you mind, Tom, how he used to read letters which he pretended he had received from Silas?"

"Aye, and from Susan too, for that matter. By gum, it's been a deep-laid scheme."

At this moment Dr. Johnson entered the house, and the strange story of the day had to be recounted to him; his principal comment upon the narrative had reference to the old calendar on the mantel-piece, upon which "November 15" was still prominent through the pencil marks made on that fatal and never-to-be-forgotten Sunday of Collinson's disappearance.



CHAPTER IX,

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW.

HE scene shifts to the highways and byways of Cartown. It is a cold, dreary afternoon. The snow is white and hard on the earth. The wind picks up loose feathery particles of it and drives them hither and thither in wavy drifts of white. It is winter over all the land. The cold is biting and bitter. It attacks you at all points and enters your very soul like iron. There is no avoiding it.

On the road leading to Cartown there is a solitary wayfarer who marches on defiant of wind and weather. He is meanly clad, but his fur cap and tightly fitting coat give

him a comfortable appearance nevertheless. A small bundle is strapped upon his shoulders, and he carries a heavy stick. The wind receives him, at every bend in the road, with an icy gust, which he parries with his arm drawn over his face. Despite the icy shower of snow crystals that meets him he is victorious; for he trudges on with a lithe swing in his gait.

The traveller is Jacob Martyn. You might have expected to find him downcast and despondent. Not so. There are marks of care upon his young face, but pride and energy shine out of the full searching eye, while the compressed lip and well-cut chin give additional evidence of mental and physical vigour.

Arrived at the entrance to Cartown, Jacob pulls his cap over his brow and pauses upon the bridge. The river, which had sparkled in the sun when he first saw it, is now silent as the tomb. It is frozen into lumps, as if its life had been stopped in the height of a wild gambol of pleasure. Jacob's fine imagination at once sees in the



picture a likeness to his own frozen hopes and prospects ; but in spite of himself he cannot shut out from his mind the thought that some morning the sun will shine upon the river and release the imprisoned waters.

Instead of going straight on into Cartown, Jacob takes a bypath which leads him to a public-house at the back of the principal street—the very house in which Mr. Spawling undertook to protect and assist Spenzonian Whiffler in the days of Petroski the clown.

Lifting the latch, Jacob enters, the wind rushing after him with a bitter hissing. Unslinging his bundle, Jacob seats himself before a great crackling wood and coal fire.

“ It’s fine and cawd,” says the landlord, a stolid, soldierly looking fellow of fifty.

Jacob makes no reply. He puts his feet upon the fender with the air of one who has taken possession of the hearth and has a right to it.

“ I said it was a cawd day !” shouts the landlord, with undisguised annoyance at his guest’s indifference.

"Indeed!" says Jacob, without turning his head; "the news is somewhat stale, What can I have to eat?"

"Supposing I say 'nowt,' Mr. Surly?" is the reply.

"I can pay for what I have," responds Jacob, turning round and looking at the host for the first time.

"Did I say thou couldn't?"

"Well, well, let us have no fuss."

"Who wants to?"

"Not I."

"Then be civil, and thou'll get civility in return," says the landlord, taking up a huge poker, and raising up the wood on the fire until the sparks leap up the chimney in a swarm, like a cloud of golden bees.

"I'm hungry," says Jacob, "and have forgotten how to pay compliments; I dare say I'm a brute, but I didn't mean to be uncivil. There! Now what can I have?"

The iron has evidently entered the soul of Jacob. The bitter experiences of life have come upon him in his youth.

"Well," replies the landlord, "if thou'rt

civil, thou can have some Irish stew and the best glass of beer in Cartown, and be served by a chap as fought at Waterloo."

"A soldier!" says Jacob quickly, "and a Waterloo veteran!"

"Right you are," says the man.

"Sir," says Jacob, "pray forgive my rudeness; I ask you ten thousand pardons."

"All right; say no more. It's my business to serve you," said the host; and he disappeared, leaving Jacob in the full enjoyment of the roaring fire.

Presently, having done full justice to the *cuisine* of the establishment, Jacob ordered a jug of hot ale, and with an air of politeness which astonished the landlord, begged that he would join him in disposing of the same.

"A man's manners always improve after dinner," said the host.

"And his strength also," said Jacob, smiling. "When a fellow is cold and hungry, his manners are apt to get frozen."

"Yes, you must have been very hungry,

master, and cold," said the host. "Here's your health!"

"And better manners to me, eh?" said Jacob, his face beaming with good humour.

"Certainly," said the old soldier. "But I'm not so sure that you're right about a chap as is hungry not being strong. I remember fighting a man of the 20th on an empty stomach; and, by jingo! I should have killed him if he hadn't shut up after th' second round."

"Yes, one feels vicious and brutal when one is very hungry," said Jacob. "By the way, can you tell me anything about the public school here?"

"Should think I can," said the soldier, tossing off another glass of his own hot and pungent liquor, which scented the room with ginger and nutmeg.

"Do you know Mr. Spawling?"

"Ay, God bless him, I do," said the landlord, his face relaxing into a genial smile. "Like some other good folk, he's gone."



"Gone!" exclaimed Jacob; "you don't mean that he is dead?"

"No, not as I knows on."

"Thank God for that," said Jacob, fervently.

"Amen," responded the landlord.

"You mean that he has left this part of the country."

"Ah, that's what I mean," said the landlord, looking at Jacob with a puzzled, inquiring air. "Why, where have I seen you before, master?"

"Here, perhaps, in Cartown," said Jacob; "but tell me, my friend, tell me about the schoolmaster."

"Gone away nigh six months back."

"Where?"

"To London, they say, but nobody seems to know for certain."

"And Spen, the—the—"

"The actor lad?" said the landlord.

"Yes; the boy who—"

"The schoolmaster took to in this very house, about ten years ago," continued the landlord; "he's a man now."

"Yes, the same," said Jacob ; "Spenzonian Whiffler he called himself."

"Ah, he was a rum 'un, and no mistake. Well, he's gone, too ; all the lot's gone, in fact."

"What ! the housekeeper, too ?" said Jacob, starting to his feet.

"Yes, and th' housekeeper too," said the landlord.

Jacob put on his cap, buttoned his coat, put half-a-crown upon the table, strode about the room, and sighed deeply, the landlord with a glass stopped short on its way to his lips staring at him.

"Look here," said Jacob ; "I shall sleep here to-night. I'll pay for what I've had : if there's any change give it to me when I come back. I'm not rich, but I can pay. Take care of my bundle."

And without another word Jacob rushed out of the house.

"Well, I don't know about that," soliloquised the landlord ; "perhaps the beds will be all engaged. We're not called on to take in lunatics, and if thou'rt not very

like one my name isn't Bill ; he's regular crazy, or else in some trouble. Why, he's left his glass full !"

This latter fact quite confirmed the landlord's views, and pondering over the circumstance he laid down his own empty glass, put forth his hand in a vague, puzzled way, carried Jacob's to his lips, and set it down again quite empty.

Jacob hurried back over the bridge and into the white fields, and on over snowy hedge and frozen ditch, leaving a long track behind him, where no other feet had pressed the virgin snow.

It had been his intention to see Dorothy privately at Cartown, and if possible to learn from her whether Lucy's love had changed. He feared for his fate because he had received no letter, from Lucy's own dear self nor from Dorothy or Spen, in reply to communications which he had sent to each. Though he had been wandering about the country for more than a year, obtaining occasional employment in various capacities, he had made arrangements for

the receipt of letters. He knew the Cartown postmaster, and had written to him saying that he had instructed some correspondents to address him at the Cartown post-office, and requesting that these letters might be forwarded to him from time to time, according to circumstances. The postmaster had written a kind note in return, gladly undertaking to see that his correspondent's wishes were carried out. Meanwhile Jacob had written a long letter to Lucy, detailing his misfortunes, but telling her that her love would support him under his afflictions, and that so long as he had that bright talisman to cheer him, he would struggle on with the hope that the day was not far distant when a brave reliance on industry and perseverance and an implicit trust in God would bring their reward. Then he told her how to address her letters to him in the future. He wrote thus the very day upon which he left Middleton. A week afterwards he received a letter from Spen, in which Whiffler told him that shortly he would be going to

London, and that if Jacob ever journeyed to Cartown and did not find him there, he must write to him "To be left at the General Post Office, London." Jacob, thinking that Spen was romancing as usual, was in no way prepared for the breaking up of the Spawling establishment. He had written to the Cartown post-office and found that no other letters had been addressed to him; he had written to Spen and received no reply; he had also despatched a letter to Dorothy as well as to Lucy. At length he began to believe in the saying about people being friends so long as the sun shines, and deserting each other in the darkness of poverty. But he was determined to satisfy himself concerning Lucy, and thus it was that he came to Cartown. His pride would not let him show himself to any one but Dorothy. With her he could have carried matters with a high hand. But the intelligence which the landlord at the public-house had given him disarranged his plans, and excited fears and forebodings that impelled him

onwards through the snow to the house of the Cantrills.

Jacob did not pause until he reached the wood. The loneliness of the place, made more apparent by the moaning of the wind among the trees, appalled him. There were the marks of other footsteps in the path that led to the well-known cottage. Could they be hers? Robinson Crusoe did not look with more curiosity and interest at the print in the sand than did Jacob at the traces of some person who had passed on before him. He contrasted the marks with the impressions made by himself. The feet that had gone before were much smaller than his own. How his heart beat! He hurried on faster, thinking he might perhaps overtake Lucy! On he went, until he saw a figure enter the garden in front of Cantrill's cottage. It was a woman, and about Lucy's height, wrapped up in a dark red cloak—it must be Lucy! No—there was an indescribable grace in Lucy's movements that was wanting here. He concealed himself behind



the gate-post at the entrance to the garden. The cloaked figure turned half round, and Jacob saw that it was the gipsy girl whom he had met in the wood when walking with Lucy. Then he saw that the cottage was deserted ; the shutters were closed ; no smoke went up from the chimney. Even Jacob's desperate energy and schooled will gave way before this realization of the forebodings that had fallen upon him when he hurried away from the inn at Cartown : he reeled, with an exclamation of pain, threw himself upon the garden step, and sobbed as though his great heart would burst.

Setting down a little basket half filled with herbs which even the snow had not concealed from her, the gipsy ran to Jacob's assistance. With the quick perception of her sex and tribe she recognised him immediately, and knew, as well as if he had told her, that Lucy was the immediate cause of his grief.

It was long ere the gipsy girl could induce Jacob to rise, and when he did comply with her urgent appeal he stood up

crushed in heart and spirit, shattered more beneath a fear of misfortune than by its actual realisation. We all suffer more from imaginary than from real calamities. It seemed to him as if Fate had left him alone with Woe.

"When did they leave?—when did *she* go?" he inquired at length, with well-acted calmness.

"A long time since," said the gipsy girl.

"How?"

"In a grand carriage that waited for her in the road near our tents," said the gipsy, watching intently the effect of her words.

"By force?" asked Jacob, excitedly, re-animated by a gleam of hope that Lucy was prevented against her will from communicating with him.

"Force!" exclaimed the gipsy. "When a country girl leans on the arm of a grand gentleman, and is conducted to a carriage in company with her mother, and rides away smiling, that doesn't look like force."

Jacob compressed his lips, and groaned inwardly.

"My dream is over, then," he said bitterly. "Oh, my God! have I deserved all this?"

The words hissed between his teeth as if his soul were in rebellion against the Deity.

"Sir—sir! you take it too much to heart," said the gipsy girl, alarmed at Jacob's wild looks.

"Heart!" exclaimed Jacob. "I had a heart once. It has been a target for all the fiends in hell! Go away, my girl; leave me."

Mother, father, home, fortune, all gone, Jacob's was indeed a sad fate; but even his dark life had been illuminated by the love of this girl, whose voice had filled his childhood with an everlasting charm. The only real happiness he had ever known had been in her society; all his hopes centred in her; she was the only encouragement he had to work and hope and strive; he clung to her love with the desperation of one who was utterly destitute of friend, home, or fortune; he had doubted her, and

that was torture ; but to have his doubts endorsed, and so cruelly endorsed as they had been, was an almost unbearable misery. He leaned against the well-known gate, gazing at the house, his thoughts wandering after the grand carriage to London ; wandering to the great city which he had never seen—the city of wealth and fame and wickedness, the city of broken hopes and of realised ambition, the great crowded, friendless city whither he had hoped some day to have carried Lucy in triumph, a conqueror in the lists of fame.

“ You saw her go ?” he said, fiercely turning upon the gipsy girl.

“ I did,” was the stern reply.

“ Was the gentleman young ?”

The gipsy nodded, and smiled a half pitying smile, which said more than words. Jacob hated her for it.

“ You lie !” Jacob exclaimed. “ You are a wicked libeller, you—— ”

The girl put her hand over Jacob’s mouth.

“ You must not say that to me. Is it

not enough that she has gone without telling you she was going? Come to our tents and rest."

"Forgive me for my harsh words," said Jacob, "and go away—leave me, leave me."





CHAPTER X,

A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

MIRIAM did not obey the imperious command which closed the last chapter. On the contrary, she induced Jacob to accompany her to the gipsy encampment. She led him away like a child. After his outburst of disappointment and grief he became calm and silent. For the time being he was indifferent about his movements. It was a dull sort of relief to walk. The wind had subsided. Evening had come on, clear and bright. There were already stars in the sky when he passed down the path from the cottage with Miriam.

The gipsies had fixed their winter quarters at a short distance from the spot where Jacob had seen their tents in the old days. Miriam conducted him through the wood to a deep and shaded valley, that very dale which he had visited on his first day at Cartown. It looked marvellously strange now lying before him under the winter sky, with mock-yellow stars down in the ravine.

Arrived at their destination, Jacob found himself in quite a formidable settlement of tents and houses on wheels. Of the latter there were several with lights shining through well-curtained windows. Standing apart from the rest was a roomy-looking hut covered with thatch and furze. You could smell the wood fagots that were burning on the hearth. A gleam of light came through the wooden doorway as Miriam thrust open the door.

"A friend of the Cantrills, who claims our hospitality," she said, with a combined air of appeal and command.

Jacob bowed his head before a motley

group of men and women who were sitting and lying before the fire.

"Who is he?" asked a bearded fellow, rising and approaching Miriam.

"A wayfarer and a son of sorrow and misfortune," said Jacob, touched by the picturesque interior.

"You are welcome," said the gipsy, looking into Jacob's face; "I have seen you in these parts before."

At a signal from Miriam, Jacob took a seat in the warmest part of the hut, and a man who had been gazing intently at him since his first entrance gathered up a cloak, and went out.

"The Baron doesn't like strangers," said a voice near Jacob; to which another answered, "He'll not be so nice when he skowers the crampings in Dinsley."

"Ah! ah! the devil claw thee, but thou'll be there before him."

"Muffle your patter; he's only here with his swag to dodge grabbing; his tale won't fadge; it's bam; he'll be at home with the jigger dubbers yet."

This conversation was carried on, in a low confidential style, by two men, who were lying on a bundle of matted straw. Though he understood but little of the gipsy cant in which they were partly speaking, Jacob could glean from it that the man who had left the hut was comparatively a stranger among them, and that there was one of the tribe who had a poor opinion of him.

A rude fireplace had been constructed at one end of the hut. The wood fire and a quaintly-contrived lamp that swung from the ceiling lit up the hut with a lurid glow, reddening the dark faces of the company, making the white teeth of the man who was laughing at the garrulous "patter" of the "Baron's" critic still whiter; casting into shadow the "furzy" corners of the apartment; bringing into relief various rough seats and couches, covered with coats and mats and thick drapery, and giving the whole scene the appearance of a set of deftly arranged accessories to heighten the beauty of Miriam, and make up an artistic picture of a gipsy queen.

A red cloak, which had previously covered the girl's black hair, was now flung carelessly over her shoulders. Her thick cloth dress was short enough to disclose a pair of beautifully rounded ankles, protected by woollen hose. She wore buckles in her thick shoes, but her bright eyes outshone the sparkles which the fire extracted from the well-polished metal.

"Now, cheer up ; this will do you good," said Miriam, handing Jacob a hot potion that smelt strong and spicy.

Jacob, who felt weak and weary, nodded his thanks, and Miriam returned his gaze with a look of complete satisfaction.

Soon afterwards Lucy's lover was fast asleep, and dreaming, not of the black-eyed beauty who leaned over his couch and covered him with a rug, but of a fair, light-haired creature, by whom he was led a weird chase over hill and dale, through valleys and over rivers ; until at a loud mocking laugh, he fell headlong over a precipice—and awoke.

With the imaginary fall Jacob's dream

ended ; but he started up at its seeming reality and uttered a cry of pain, whereupon a heavy hand grasped him by the shoulder, and the man who had left the hut when he and Miriam entered it said, "Hush—be quiet, for your life."

Jacob looked round. He found himself lying alone in a corner. He could hear voices hard by, but the hut was evidently closed for the night. He must have slept some hours.

" You are safe and in the hands of a friend, but we are both in danger," said the man.

" I have heard your voice before," said Jacob.

" Follow me," said the man.

Jacob hesitated.

" Fool!" hissed the man. " Take this, and fear no harm."

Jacob grasped the pistol which the stranger thrust into his hand,

" Will you trust me now? Another minute and we are lost—come!"

Half believing that he was still in a

dream, Jacob arose and followed his guide. They passed two or three tents. The lights were out in the houses on wheels. It was a bright starlight night. The white, shining snow seemed to give forth a light of its own. When they were at a safe distance from the gipsy village Jacob's midnight disturber halted suddenly.

"You heard them speak of the Baron?" he said.

"Yes."

"It amused you, no doubt."

"I do not understand you," said Jacob.

"Jacob Martyn," said the man, "you know me."

"Good heavens, yes!" said Jacob, "now that you speak in your natural voice. It is Jennings."

"Enough," said Jennings.

"What means this masquerade?"

"Jacob Martyn, I once tried hard to serve you. As Heaven is my judge, I strove to avert that smash at Middleton."

"I believe you."

"Have I, then, any claim on your consideration?"

"Certainly. But why all this mystery? Why drag me out of a warm corner into the cold" (Jacob shivered) "to ask me so silly a question?"

"Do you mean to say you are not here as a spy?"

Jennings turned sharply upon him as he asked the question, thrusting his face close to Jacob's and gripping him tightly by the arm.

"A spy!" exclaimed Jacob.

"A spy!" hissed Jennings; "to track me and take me."

"Track you! take you! what do you mean? You must be mad; that can be the only explanation of this strange conduct. Hands off, Jennings!"

"Swear it," said Jennings.

"Don't be a fool," said Jacob, thrusting the man from him and assuming an attitude of defence.

"Pooh!" said Jennings, "there is nothing in that pistol, but in this there is a bit

of lead that would settle you before you could say ‘Jack Robinson.’”

“I don’t want to say ‘Jack Robinson.’ Let me go. You are playing a very poor trick upon an old friend.”

“I begin to believe you,” said Jennings. “Here, take this scarf, tie it round your neck—you are cold. How long is it since you were in Middleton? Answer my questions, and we will return.”

There was something so firm and earnest in the manner of Jennings that Jacob felt bound to comply.

“I have not been in Middleton since my father’s death.”

“Where have you been?”

“Everywhere: but let us go back to the fire.”

“In good time. What have you been doing?”

“Working.”

“At what?”

“Writing, teaching, printing.”

“Newspapers?” This latter interrog-

gation was made sharply, and with the speaker's hand once more on Jacob's arm.

"No; with the exception of a poem in the corner of a Darnforth paper."

"How long is that since?"

"Months. It is called 'A Dream of Love'; would you like to hear it?"

Jacob laughed a grim, sarcastic laugh.

"Will you swear you know nothing of what has transpired at Middleton for six months?"

"Yes, madman; anything you like, if you will let me get back to the fire."

"Nothing of that discovery at Magar's mill?" said Jennings, his hand trembling on his pistol, his face once more close to Jacob's—so close that Jacob felt his hot breath, and saw the wild gaze of his sunken eyes.

"No."

"On your honour?"

"On my honour."

"I believe you. Let us return; we can talk as we ~~oo~~."

"Now for my explanation. I am an outlaw. I have made money by criminal practices; I have cheated Magar; the police want me—now do you understand my disguise?"

"Yes, and you may rely on it, with that other voice of yours."

"Will you make me a solemn vow for 'auld lang syne'; for the sake of what I tried to do for your father?"

"Name it."

"As you hope for prosperity in this world and happiness in the next, you will not, by word or deed, aid or assist in my capture. Swear me that on your honour and on this Testament (producing a book)."

"It is a great oath."

"Do you reject it?"

"No; why should I? Why should misfortune run down misfortune? There are worse crimes than cheating Magar."

"Will you swear?"

Jacob repeated the oath and kissed the Testament.



"Signed, sealed, and delivered," said Jennings, pocketing the book. "I keep the Testament with me because my mother gave it to me when I was a boy. I wonder it does not scorch my pocket out and set me ablaze with the fires of hell; but no matter, we do not make our own destiny, it is all chalked out for us—we can't help it."

"And is this mountebank nonsense all that is to repay me for my nocturnal promenade? You said we were in danger."

"I thought *I* was in danger," said Jennings in the other voice. "I am the Baron once more."

"Is your lordship married?" said Jacob.

"My lordship is not," said the Baron; "if I had any sentiment in my soul I should have shot you for the interest which that girl Miriam takes in you."

"Who is she?"

"Our queen-elect; and a fine creature to boot. I suppose you intend to join us, and go in for the throne, eh?"

"Even that might suit my present mood," said Jacob.

By this time they had reached the hut; Miriam was standing at the door.





CHAPTER XI.

RETURNS TO THE HISTORY OF LUCY ;
GLANCES BACK TO THE DAYS OF HER
FATHER ; AND DESCRIBES THE CONTENTS
OF AN IMPORTANT PACKET WHICH CREATED
A PROFOUND SENSATION IN PARK LANE.

LA KING up the history of Lucy where Dorothy Cantrill left off, it now becomes necessary that the reader should know what became of her father, and her father's father. The story may be briefly told.

When the British Guards dashed into the Bois de Bossu, and drove out the French, a lieutenant fell mortally wounded ; and the soldiers of Napoleon, on their way to Waterloo, some two or three days

afterwards trampled over the shallow but glorious grave of Lieutenant Thornton, next to whose cold heart lay a portrait of Lucy's mother.

A week prior to this event the poor lieutenant, who had a presentiment that he would not live to see the end of the engagements which were expected, gave his servant a packet, with directions that in case his gloomy predictions were fulfilled he would find out Portland House, Park Lane, London, and deliver it into his uncle's hands.

When the servant reached his native city in the West of England, he made love to a buxom landlady, won her heart and her business, and forgot to deliver the packet of his dead master. Six months afterwards he remembered that it was in his old trunk under the bed ; and then he determined to start off to execute his neglected commission : but he got drunk while his good intentions were still warm, and six months more passed away. And so the time rolled on, month after month, year after

year, until the unfaithful servant could get drunk no more. Eventually he “drained the flowing bowl” to the dregs, and died of a surfeit thereof, leaving behind him a still marriageable widow, and a reputation for being a “jolly fellow.” He was succeeded by a more sober and conscientious person, who made the widow a wife for the third time, rubbed out the former landlord’s name from over the door, pulled out the trunk from under the bed, and discovered the packet which his predecessor had neglected. The “blushing bride” had heard something of the “big letter,” and handed it to the “happy bridegroom,” who had once been a solicitor’s clerk, which had made him somewhat methodical in matters of letter writing. The official-looking envelope brought back to him, even in the fulness of his marriage bliss, remembrances of sitting on a high stool to copy letters, and leaving it to see that they were properly posted : so, after carefully scrutinising the letter, he ordered Tim, the pot-boy, to have it posted, but not until he had added

after the name of Mr. Thornton, in case death might have carried off that gentleman, "his heirs, exors., or assns."

And thus at last was Lieutenant Thornton's letter delivered.

The gentleman who received the packet was the brother of the dead lieutenant's father. The latter gentleman had died, when the news of Waterloo was tossing on the sea off Dover, in ignorance of the death of his son, whose name had not, strange to say, appeared in the lists of either killed, wounded, or missing, so far as either father or uncle had seen. More than six months prior to his death the angry old man had, by a codicil to the will in which his son had been cut off without even the traditional shilling, almost reinstated him in his former position, dividing between his brother and his son the magnificent property of which he died possessed, the brother being left sole trustee.

Just about the time that the mysterious packet arrived by post, Cavendish Thornton, Esquire, had been holding a conversa-



tion with his lawyer relative to the property of his nephew. He had long since ascertained from the Horse Guards that the lieutenant was killed at Quatre Bras; and though some years had elapsed since his brother died, he was not happy in retaining property which had not been bequeathed to him. He had understood that his nephew was a father, and had instituted some private inquiries respecting his supposed child, but without any satisfactory result; and the trustee was still in duty bound, as his lawyer advised him, to retain property to which nobody had a greater right. Though he had much of that family pride which had so strongly influenced his brother when the young soldier married Lucy's mother, yet he combined the highest feelings of honour and honesty therewith; and his lawyer found it a difficult task to make him feel that he was not outraging any of these virtues by keeping possession of the fine property to which he had no doubt a high claim. "We have made proper inquiries after the child," said

the lawyer, “and find it an imaginary one : we have advertised for the next of kin to your nephew, and find, though we have had a few speculative answers, that *you* are the next of kin.”

The mysterious packet put an end to these periodical discussions. It contained the last will and testament of James Cavendish Thornton, lieutenant in his Majesty’s army, wherein he bequeathed everything of which he died possessed, or of which he might become possessed under the will of his father, James William Cavendish Thornton, gentleman, of Portland House, Park Lane, London, or in any other way whatsoever, and of any property whatsoever, real or personal, whether in lands or money, houses, plate, furniture, linen, or jewellery, deeds, scrip, and all other valuables whatsoever and wheresoever, to his daughter, Lucy Cavendish Thornton, who was left in the custody of certain persons named Cantrill, at and in the neighbourhood of Middleton, the relatives of testator’s beloved wife, deceased, Lucy Thornton.

The will was written on a sheet of letter paper in the lieutenant's own writing, and was duly signed and witnessed. It was accompanied by a letter addressed—

“To my Father, if he be still living.”

Mr. Thornton, who had dismissed the lawyer, and called in his confidential valet to make some enquiries respecting “these Cantrills,” made up his mind to read the letter, and asked his advice as to the propriety of opening it.

“It is hardly for me to say what is the correct thing to do, sir,” said Allen, gravely.

Allen had been in the family for many years, had, in short, grown fat and wheezy and arrogant in the service. He was now something between a secretary and a butler to his master, who, since the death of his brother, had talked a great deal to Allen about old times, and had twice sent for Allen after dinner, when there were no visitors, to drink a glass of wine with him.

“You see, Allen, there is something very extraordinary in this case. It is a letter from the dead to the dead.”

Allen wiped two drops of perspiration from his manly forehead, and with a shudder that seemed like the action of a small earthquake beneath his waistcoat, said (wonderful Allen !) "Yes it is."

"Then, do you think I should open it?" said Mr. Thornton, eyeing it curiously through his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Trustee to the defunct's will, sir. Should say you ought to, sir."

"So I think, Allen," said Mr. Thornton ; "but again, Allen, I tell you, as I told you yesterday, I dislike that word 'defunct.' There ! there ! let us have no discussion about it, but don't repeat it."

Allen had duly trespassed, in course of time, upon his master's kindness, and had grown pompous with good living and indulgence ; so he replied—

"It's a dictionary word, sir ; I have it from the one you gave me years ago, when you said I suffered from the western dialect, and I studied pronunciation and language in consequence."

"Very well, very well ; then take a pen



and erase it from the dictionary, Allen. I object to it," said Mr. Thornton, with his thumb beneath the seal of the dead lieutenant's letter. "I feel I ought to read this. It may relate to business plans which I may carry out on behalf of my poor brother James, who relented about the young fellow at last, and wished to serve him."

"Certainly ; that was my meaning, sir," said Allen.

Mr. Thornton read as follows :—

"BRUSSELS, June 5, 1815.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"We are now covering Brussels, and ere long expect to meet the enemy. Taking time by the forelock, in case I may fall, I have forwarded to my uncle papers which he will show you ; and which I look to you, sir, to make of value.

"I conjure you, by the memory of my mother whom you loved, by my own sufferings, and by the days of my boyhood when I sat upon your knee, to find out my dear

child Lucy, and let her be to you what I was in the days that are gone.

“ Of her mother I will only remind you that she died when Lucy was born, and that she died beloved and revered by

“ Your most unhappy son,

“ JAMES CAVENDISH THORNTON.”

The grand old gentleman did not read the whole of this to Allen ; but communicated to that independent and worthy servitor the nature of the contents thereof, coughing once or twice as he did so, and wiping his eye-glasses with evident emotion.

Allen, who was by no means an ill-disposed person or a hard-hearted man, saying it was very affecting, seated himself and waited for some further communication from his master, who laid down the letter from his dead nephew to his dead brother, heaved a sigh, and proceeded to inspect the following letter enclosed for himself, which had escaped his notice until Allen had directed his attention to it :—

“ BRUSSELS, June 15, 1815.

“ MY DEAR UNCLE,—

“ At last the news has arrived. We have just learnt that the rumour of the advance of the French upon the line of the Sambre is a fact. The army is moving on Quatre Bras, and we who are in Brussels, including Lord Wellington, start for the rendezvous almost instantly.

“ I have a strange presentiment that my hour is coming. I have had many narrow escapes. Bloodier work than I have yet seen is, I believe, coming on, and graves are already yawning for their tenants. That we shall be victorious I have no doubt ; that every man in this army would die rather than yield I could swear. The Thorntons were never braggarts, uncle, nor cowards ; and your nephew fears death no more than he fears the French. But soldiers have their presentiments and touches of superstitious feeling as well as sailors ; and the thought has occurred to me frequently of late that in some battle, at no distant date, I shall be with those whom

Fate has marked down for sacrifice in the victories that are coming.

"I have a child. Until lately I knew not how much I loved it; for a time I could almost have persuaded myself that no affection could centre in a child, the birth of which was destined to rob me of the dearest treasure on earth. I should not write to you thus were I not satisfied, uncle, that you will read it only when I am dead. Few of us know each other when we are living. Of late frequent contemplation of the likeness of her I loved so dearly, and whose spirit is near me whilst I write, has brought me to my proper senses, and restored my love for her child, my poor little deserted Lucy—your relative, uncle, remember that—and I enclose to you my last wishes respecting her, and a letter for my father, whom may God forgive as I do.

"Seek out my child. They said she was like *her*; if so, the whole pedigree of the Thorntons may be searched in vain for one to surpass her in beauty, in goodness, in affection. Plead for her with my father.

Give him this opportunity to atone for the past, and for your success I shall offer up my last prayer.

“ I left my child with the relatives of my wife at Middleton. They may soon be found out ; leave no corner of the empire unsearched as you hope for mercy, and as you loved one who never harmed you, and who has upheld the honour of his family on the field of battle, and laid down his life for his king and country.

“ Your unhappy
“ NEPHEW.”

“ There, Allen !” exclaimed Mr. Thornton, rising from his seat and pacing the room excitedly. “ Presentiments ! poor boy ; poor fellow ! Egad, sir ! I have had presentiments about this matter. Egad ! I shall believe in dreams, and broomsticks, and witches soon !”

“ There is one as does a good trade, sir, near the church at Westminster,” said Allen, rising also, and looking round him with superstitious awe.

"I have dreamed more than once that there would be a claimant for that property," said Mr. Thornton, breaking out between his remarks into exclamations of "Poor fellow!" "Brave as a lion, sir, to the last," "A Thornton, sir—after all, a Thornton."

"Aye, sir, they was great fighters," said Allen, wiping his face.

"*Were*, sir, *were*—'was' is a gross vulgarism as you too frequently use it; the rule is——"

"Where, sir? Why, in many a battle, even so far back as the days of Cressy," said Allen, pretending not to understand the correction of his grammar.

"Well! well! we will not waste time now," said Mr. Thornton, putting his glasses into a red morocco case. "Order my carriage, Allen. We will find this child. Pack up some shirts and all necessities, Allen; we may be away several days."

"Yes, sir," said Allen, who always prided himself upon his prompt execution of Mr.

Thornton's commands; and was highly esteemed by his master for the care which he exercised in anticipating his wants, and for generally understanding him.

“I'm getting an old man now. I don't know that I ever injured any one; and when I think of the past, I don't know that I ever did anybody any particular good. I have been as liberal as most men in what are called charities. Well, well, nephew. Your last wishes shall be carried out. Somebody shall be made happy. Yes; his father forgave him; and whatever his child may be, she shall have her own. Poor dear fellow! Egad! I could almost make a fool of myself. Yes, yes: she shall be found, James Cavendish Thornton—if she lives she shall be found; if she be dead, she shall have honour done to her memory. But, after all, that is empty work. Posthumous honours—well, well, I must not change my creed now; but I'll supplement it with a noble action. God grant an old man's prayer, that she may still be living!”

The fine old boy, overcome by his feel-

ings, buried his face in his hands, and repeated the supplication with an energy that had not characterised any other action of his life since he left college.





CHAPTER XII.

SHOWS HOW THE CHANGE IN LUCY'S FORTUNES
AFFECTED THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

JT is not necessary that I should describe how Mr. Thornton discovered and brought home his niece and her foster-mother. The adventures of himself and Mr. Allen, their disputes and arguments, their disappointment and final success, present no special features worthy of detail. Jacob's interview with Miriam, the pretty queen-elect of the gipsies, has already posted us up in the manner of the Cantrills' removal, only that Mademoiselle Miriam fed Jacob's jealousy and disappointment with falsehoods. She distinctly planted in his mind,

however much he rejected it, the picture of his love going off in a carriage with a young and handsome gentleman. His thoughts easily followed hers, because he had told Lucy that if he were a young rich acquaintance of my lord's coming there to shoot, he should certainly carry off the keeper's daughter. Moreover, during Jacob's idle time at the gipsy village, Miriam, with subtle power, had led him to think of Lucy married and settled; for Jacob would talk of her despite Miriam's undisguised aversion to the subject of their conversation.

"It is not to be wondered at," he said one day in reply to the gipsy girl's remarks; "why should a girl fit to adorn any station in life throw herself away upon a beggar?"

"You are not a beggar—even we gypsies are not beggars, despised though we be," said Miriam proudly.

They were sitting by the fire in the hut. Miriam slept in an adjacent house on wheels. During the day, when not abroad, she spent most of her time in the hut, stringing shells and putting in some artistic

touches to fancy baskets and other articles which the tribe manufactured.

"A mere peep into the great wide world will sometimes carry a girl's heart away, your sex is so very fickle, Miriam."

"Not ours—not the gipsy; faithlessness is death."

The girl's black eyes flashed with a hot passionate glance. For a moment it embarrassed Jacob. Her undisguised regard for him showed him the danger of his ground:

"How is it, Miriam," he said, changing the subject, "that you are so much superior to the people about you—to your mother, for example?"

"I can read and write. The mysteries and customs of our people are not mere oral traditions to me. I have books, and moreover I have read the poets; our people often buy me books for which they have bartered their goods, and I sometimes read to them a blood-stirring poem—a story of love and vengeance."

"Love is a delusion," said Jacob; "never

believe in love—it is only to be found in poetry; and vengeance is not worth the trouble which it involves."

" You only say so because your love is despised—you gave your heart to that poor, fickle thing at the cottage, and you are mad at being deceived."

" Speak respectfully of the lady," said Jacob.

" Lady ! she is no lady," said Miriam, scornfully. " Am I a lady ?"

" Certainly ; you will be a queen some day," said Jacob. " I should be ungrateful to quarrel with so charming and distinguished a hostess ; but do not speak of that young lady as a fickle thing."

" You are a fool, a poor weak fool," said Miriam, standing before him with anger flashing in her eyes.

" Thank you," said Jacob.

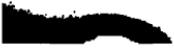
Miriam left the hut to vent the remainder of her passion upon some members of the tribe. These outbursts were frequent. She was not accustomed to have her wishes thwarted. If Jacob had not

been attracted to the spot and kept there by the magic of old associations, he would have gone on his way long ago. He lingered about the scenes of his early happiness, feeling that his joys were all in the past. He would not harbour in his mind an unkind thought of Lucy. She was inexperienced ; she had not known the world when she met him. Sometimes he tried to think that she might be still true to him, but the fact that he had received neither letter nor message from her did not allow him to retain this sweet conceit without many grave misgivings.

Let me disabuse the minds of my readers of any such conflicting doubts and fears as those which Miriam fanned in the mind of Jacob. Lucy Cavendish Thornton was not to blame ; whom do you think was the chief sinner ? The gentleman who closed the last chapter with a vow that he would do a noble deed, and a prayer that he might be permitted to make the living happy, in atonement for the faults both of the living and the dead. And yet Mr.

Thornton had never been known to be guilty of an unkind action in his life. He had done more generous things than he admitted to himself, as I introduced him to you, pacing about, in his library, under a conflict of sorrow and remorse.

When he strung himself up to that pitch of magnanimity which I have previously described, he thought of finding Lucy a poor country girl, ill-bred and devoid of manners, in some outlandish place. Indeed, after discovering her whereabouts, and on their way to Cartown, he had frequently said to Allen that it would be a severe trial to set up a gawky country woman in an establishment near his own, and introduce her to Society; but he was determined to carry out the first instincts of humanity which had moved him on reading her father's letters. "She's been in a factory, too," Allen had observed, rather deprecatingly. "So it appears," Mr. Thornton had replied with a sigh; but still he was resolute. "Queer characters, sir, factory girls," Allen had rejoined. "Not a word,



sir, reflecting upon her honour, for your life ; one drop of Thornton blood in her veins is sufficient protection for her, if she be a drudge in a——” Mr. Thornton had not finished the sentence, but had thrown up the window for air.

So soon as the high-born gentleman saw Lucy, some of his better feelings regarding her evaporated, pride stepping in furious and rampant. Fear to acknowledge her as his niece ! she was fit for a princess. In her the glories of the Thorntons would be resuscitated. She should marry as she deserved to marry ! All the world should sue at her feet !

But Allen, who had inquired into every particular of Lucy's history, told Mr. Thornton that she had a lover already.

“ A lover, sir ! How dare any one presume so far, without consulting her guardian, her great-uncle ? ” said Mr. Thornton, angrily.

“ Somebody has dared, at all events,” said Allen, defiantly.

"Who is he, Allen? who is he?"

"Well, they say he's nothing now," said Allen, calmly wiping his face with an enormous silk handkerchief.

"Allen, how dare you torture and bore me in this fashion? Out with it, sir."

"I were not aware I were torturing you."

"Were, were—*was*, sir, *was*—for Heaven's sake, Allen, don't be so stupid."

"You said quite the contrary, sir, if I may remind you, the other day, when it was—*were*, sir, *were*, sir."

"Damn the fellow. There, Allen! I've not sworn for years."

"It's rather late to begin, sir, and with an old servant," said Allen, while the evidence of an earthquake, beneath his waistcoat, was awful to contemplate. His shirt frill rose with undisguised emotion, and two buttons, which could no longer bear the beating of his tender heart, parted company with his waistcoat.

Mr. Thornton marched about his room (for they had returned to Park Lane, with

Lucy, when this scene occurred), and tried to be calm.

“ Well, now, then let us see what mildness will do, Allen. There now, I ask you quietly who has dared to seek to win the affections of my niece, without my consent?”

“ Jacob Something, they call him,” said Allen, picking up the fallen buttons.

“ Who is he?”

“ Well, I cannot tell; they do say his father died insolvent.”

“ Monstrous! monstrous!” exclaimed Mr. Thornton. “ Was his father in trade?”

“ The lovers have written to each other, and there’s one of the epistles,” said Allen, throwing down the very letter which Jacob had written to Lucy, telling her of his departure, and instructing her where to address him.

“ And where did you get this?”

“ Well, you see, as I thought nothing should be left undone, I went to the nearest post-office to where the young lady lived,

and instructed them to send all letters under cover to you, sir, who was her lawful guardian, and I awed them with some envelopes ready directed, and a sovereign to pay expenses, which they refused, but which I left—and this is the result, sir," after which Mr. Allen regarded his master with an air of triumph, and blew his nose fiercely.

"Good!" said Mr. Thornton. "But to open a letter which belongs to your mistress, Allen——"

"I have not opened it," said Allen.

"I should hope not—to intercept it, Allen, is bad enough."

"Then I'll take it to her," said Allen, seizing the letter.

"No; after all it is my letter. I am her guardian, her trustee, her father and mother, her great uncle, the brother of her grandfather, her only living relative, her guide, counsellor, and friend. Yes, you are right, Allen."

"Thank you, sir; I should say I were right, looking at all the circumstances."

"Was right," said Mr. Thornton ; "and damn your circumstances."

"Yes, sir, if you please ; but I will not submit to this any longer," said Allen, mopping his face with his handkerchief, blowing his nose, and coughing violently.

"That will do, Allen," said Mr. Thornton.

"No, it will not do, sir; I shall leave your service—I insist on it. Ever since my young lady has been found you have treated me like a dog ; sir, I gives you warning once for all."

"Give, Allen, give."

"Yes, sir, if you please, sir."

"Now, no more nonsense, my good fellow ; I am very sorry I have hurt you feelings ; I apologise ; there ! Never before was a Thornton known to do such a thing ; no, not in all their history."

"You shall not do it, sir," said Allen.

"I will."

"No, sir, never. I forgive you, sir."

"Very well, that is right, Allen ; we are on the old terms again ?"

"We are, sir, and many of them."

"Allen, do you take your wine before luncheon?" said Mr. Thornton.

"Just a drop of sherry and bitters," said Allen.

"Very well," said Mr. Thornton, with a look of doubt in his grey eyes that twinkled behind his heavy eye-glass.

"Yes, sir, it is very well."

"Then once more to the subject in hand. On second thoughts your foresight in this matter of the letters has my best thanks; I cannot reward you after the manner of your present to the local post-office; I would not insult you, Allen. I thank you, Allen, thank you heartily."

Allen thereupon wiped his brow in comfort, and looked superlatively superior to his master.

"But now and for ever we must put an end to this plebeian love-making; it will soon be over; there must be no letter writing, or if there is there must be no posting of letters; you understand, Allen?"

Allen understood all his master's thoughts,

wishes, and desires—understood them often before they were expressed, which is the height of efficiency in a servant.

“She will soon recover herself,” said Mr. Thornton. “Girls in country places always have lovers; no wonder Lucy had one; but she will rise with her fortunes; she has the true Thornton blood; she will marry worthily; her beauty and her family and her wealth entitle her to make a good match.”

“It is so,” said Allen.

“It *shall* be so,” said Mr. Cavendish Thornton.

Thus was a formidable conspiracy against Jacob Martyn inaugurated and put into action.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE BELLE OF A LONDON SEASON.

SHE was a mystery. Not after the manner of the present day, though the time is only a few years back.

A lady with any mystery in her career nowadays is at once associated with the *demi-monde*. The changes which have taken place in London society are very great within the past few years. Ladies of questionable repute, nay, women of the town, distinguish themselves in all our places of public resort. They are everywhere. They ride the best horses, rival the Court in carriages and ponies, they "walk in the Zoo," display their dress improvers at South Kensington, leer at you

at the theatres, flash their diamonds on the grand tier of the opera ; now and then they are even presented at Court; they are always conspicuous at the boat-race, and they monopolise some of the best houses in the prettiest suburbs of the town. Society is more and more tolerant of these creatures. Young innocent girls copy their style of dress and manner in the hope of captivating the men who do not marry because of the increased freedom which society has extended towards them. I am not an old man. I do not therefore know how long this present looseness in London society has been coming on ; I only know that when a certain belle of the season only a few comparatively short years ago dazzled Mayfair, the shop windows of the metropolis had not burst out into exhibitions of infamous photographs ; and it seems to me that this great triumph of Anonyma in London society dates from the time when photographers commenced to take their types of female beauty from the class of women who now fill so large a space in

the public eye—here, there, and everywhere.

It almost makes my pen falter to mention my mysterious belle of a London season on the same paper which holds this short discourse upon Circe. Her name was Lucy Cavendish Thornton. You can imagine that fair, round, supple, young, healthy, bright-eyed cottage beauty of Cartown, full of native grace, who looked like a princess even when she was cleaning up the kitchen ; you can fancy how this fresh rural beauty would shine and glow in Mayfair ! The niece of Mr. Cavendish Thornton, of Park Lane, a gentleman of high family and unblemished honour, Lucy took her place in the foremost rank of society. She was presented at Court, she had an establishment of her own in Piccadilly. Her present wealth was enormous, and as old Thornton's heiress, her expectations were equally great. Although comparatively uneducated, she was a lady by nature, and readily fell into the ways of her advancement. Moreover, before Mr. Thornton



introduced her to Mayfair he surrounded her privately with tutors, male and female ; he gave her the benefit of the advice of a professed *chaperon*, who had brought out some of the most fashionable ladies of the time, and more than that, she had the run of the best milliners and dressmakers, jewellers, and lace dealers ; he took her over to Paris on a flying visit, coming home through Germany ; he told her over and over again the Thornton history, and asked her to do justice to her name, and play the part of princess. Old Thornton was as pleased with her as if she had been the special gift of a fairy. She was in all his thoughts. He anticipated her every want. He loaded her with the rarest gifts. She was in an atmosphere of pomp and luxury. If Thornton himself had been a magician in disguise when he appeared at the cottage of the Cantrills, he could hardly have made a greater change in the life of Lucy than that which his visit had inaugurated. Silks and satins, lace and diamonds, instead of cotton and woollen, simple ribbon and glass

beads. She was mistress of every desire, and she did justice to her position.

It was her first season. She was the rage. Lady Mary Miffits, her *chaperon*, had never received so much attention in all her career. Uncle Thornton was as proud as a Thornton and as jealous as a Turk. He was by Lucy's side in the Row, he was with her at the opera. Fortune-hunting gadflies had not too many opportunities of pouring their pretty nonsense into Lucy's ear, though mademoiselle was quite inclined to flirt. She had made her uncle uncomfortable once or twice, but Lucy replied to his words of alarm with such merry badinage that he declared she was a true Thornton, and fit to be a princess.

Young Max Walton was the only fellow who seemed to have the smallest chance of making a favourable impression upon the belle. He had met her at his brother's town house at Queen's Gate. Lord Folden was his brother. The family were wealthy, and the Hon. Max Walton was the next heir.



"I like Max Walton," said Lucy to her confidante, Dorothy Cantrill, "because he does not treat me as if I were a fool."

Dorothy was sitting with Miss Thornton in the belle's boudoir while the belle was sipping a cup of coffee prior to dressing for a dinner party at Lord Folden's.

"He is very handsome," said Dorothy, "but—"

"But what?" said Lucy.

"Not so handsome as somebody else."

"You mean Jacob," said Lucy; "I don't agree with you. I never thought Mr. Martyn handsome."

"*Mr.* Martyn," said Dorothy, with much emphasis on the Mister.

"You do not think 'Mister' sufficiently familiar?" said Lucy.

"Not if you care anything for him, miss," said Dorothy.

"*Miss!* There you are again. I suppose that means you no longer care anything about me," said Lucy.

"Well, I really feel as if it was not right to call you 'Lucy,'" said Dorothy; "it does

seem so wonderful for me to be sitting here on silks and satins, and looking into gold looking glasses, and that, and calling the mistress of it all 'Lucy.' Don't you think me and mother had better go back into the country?"

"If you are not happy, Dorothy, by all means; but surely with your own apartments, dear, and everything you can wish for—"

"Yes, yes, Lucy, that is right enough; but somehow I feel like a fish out of water, or a newt taken out of a ditch and put into a crystal fountain."

"And is this to be the result of my good fortune?—the loss of everybody I love!" exclaimed Lucy, fanning her cheeks that were still rosy, despite a score of late nights in hot, stifling rooms.

"No, don't say that, dear."

"I do say it," said Lucy, petulantly. "This Jacob Martyn of whom you speak, you give me credit for casting him off; it is not so; he has deserted me; he is too proud to come to me now that I am rich."

"No, dear," said Dorothy, mildly; "he must know that your uncle would not hear of such a match."

"If he had heard so a hundred times, and a hundred uncles stood between him and the girl he really loved, that should make her doubly precious. He ought to fight his way and meet me on my own ground if he cares for me."

"Do not be angry; I dare say Mr. Max Walton will make up for the loss of poor Jacob."

"Dorothy, you shall not talk to me in that way," said Lucy, beginning to cry with vexation. "You will make me hate Jacob Martyn."

Lucy hid her face in her hands, and tossed her pretty little foot up and down, and rocked herself to and fro; while Dorothy patted her head and called her "darling" and "love;" and presently the sweet face which had looked out of the factory window in Jacob's boyhood turned smiling to Dorothy and kissed the kind countrywoman, and begged her to forgive her ingratitude.

"I am becoming spoiled, Dorothy, I know I am; I feel my heart changing; I am beginning to like this gay, frivolous life; I shall only be fit for some wealthy aristocrat soon."

Dorothy drew her arm round Lucy's waist, and for a few brief minutes the two were once more in the old house among the trees, with the kitchen clock ticking in their ears, and the homely smell of the tarred mantelpiece insinuating itself into the perfumed atmosphere of the belle's fairylike boudoir.

"Ah, poor Jacob!" Dorothy whispered.

Lucy hid her face in the woman's neck.

"If he had only written," said Lucy.

"Does he really know where we are?"

"Does he!" said Lucy, with a little of her former asperity. "Did I not write? Twice, I believe?"

"Did he get the letters, dear?"

"Did he not? Have I not his reply to the first one? That he would write soon—*soon!*"

"Think of his troubles."



"I do, God knows how much! If I only knew that he was not toiling for bread I should be satisfied. If I could help him without his knowledge. I sometimes think I will consult my uncle about him."

"Don't do that, dear," said Dorothy; "Mr. Thornton is so very proud. No, no, not at present, dear; let me advise you in this."

A knock at the door. Mrs. Thornton's maid had come to say that she feared my lady would be late. Lady Mary was already dressed. Lucy kissed Dorothy and gave herself over to her maid, a bright, clever little lady, who deferentially chatted to Lucy about a hundred incidents of fashionable gossip. Lucy soon regained her spirits under this change of companionship, and when she took his arm an hour afterwards, and stepped into his brougham *en route* for Queen's Gate, Uncle Thornton said he had never seen her look better. A little later Max Walton declared upon his soul that Venus was a fool to old Thornton's niece. He vowed the world

had never seen such a round, scrumptious, sweet-lipped, dainty beauty as Miss Thornton. Lord Folden, his brother, did not altogether agree with Max ; but his lordship was married.

"Have I your lordship's consent to marry her ?" said Max when the party was at an end, and the last carriage had been called.

"By all means," said his lordship. "Have another cigar ?"

"Will your lordship do the correct thing ?"

"Give you the Fenchale Estate ?"

"That same," said Max, smiling, and lighting another cigar.

"I will," said Lord Folden.

"Then, by Jupiter ! she is mine," said the Hon. Max Walton.

While this conversation was going on Miss Thornton was being presented to a Cabinet Minister's wife, whose assemblies were famous for their pretty women and famous men. Men and women were talking about the new arrival, in every corner

of the several rooms which were thrown into each other for conversation and refreshment, the music-room, one of the most exquisitely decorated *salons* in London, being devoted to dancing, which had not yet commenced.

It was curious to hear the various stories of Lucy's career. She was not Thornton's niece at all, some said, but his daughter by an illustrious lady from whom he had been divorced in the East. One who knew all about the story said she was picked up on the road to Waterloo, her mother (the wife of an officer) having been killed by a cannon shot. Her father was Mr. Thornton's brother, and a major in the army promoted on the field of battle for his gallantry. He had married his wife contrary to his father's consent. The child had been discovered in a convent in the south of France. Her grandfather relented before he died, and left all his immense fortune to his son, not knowing that he had fallen gloriously fighting for his king. This young lady was his heiress, and in addition to enormous pos-

sessions in land and a slice of Piccadilly, she would come in for all old Thornton's money. It was no wonder, they all agreed, that she was the belle of the season—such a combination of money and beauty! It was certainly not true, Lady Mary Miffits told a little group of dowagers, that Miss Thornton had worked in a factory; not true that she had been a barmaid; and it was a gross calumny to say that she had had no education. She could assure their ladyships that Miss Thornton was in every respect worthy of the distinction of their ladyships' patronage and consideration.

It was morning again when Lucy returned home—a bright summer morning. A light mist hung among the trees in the Park. Early workmen were clattering over the pavement of Piccadilly. Lucy noticed a poor little outcast watching with hungering eyes the scanty business of a coffee-stall planted against the Park railings. Lady Mary Miffits shrugged her shoulders when Miss Thornton, with sympathetic glance, pointed to this wayside picture of



London life. He was a crossing-sweeper, that poor waif of the streets. He had been busy with his broom late into the night, and at four o'clock in the morning was not rich enough to buy a cup of coffee. The thought struck a sad key in Lucy's memory. When she was alone in her own room, she flung herself upon a couch and wept. She could not think why it was that she felt so miserable. It never seemed to her that her melancholy came from sheer overwork. She was tired, worn out, and too much excited for sleep. She opened a cabinet and drew from it a miniature which had been painted by her uncle's order. It was the portrait of her father when he was a young man, and before he had entered the army. The only token which she possessed to remind her of her mother, whom she had never seen, was a light brown curl of hair, which Mrs. Cantrill had given to her in the old time.

How completely these relics indicated her position. Although she had never known what it was to dwell in the sunshine

of a mother's love, she seemed now for the first time to require a mother's guidance and sympathy. She needed advice and assistance—the affectionate regard of a higher nature than Dorothy's, and of a nobler ambition than that which inspired the spinsterial breast of Lady Miffits. Dorothy only talked of to-day; Lady Miffits of the beneficent laws of society; and her uncle of ancestral glories and being worthy of them. In the midst of all her wealth and honour, despite her woman's triumph in the Row, at Lord Folden's, in Belgravia's halls and assemblies, at Court, and everywhere else, Miss Thornton was not happy. One great drawback to the full enjoyment of her position was her want of education, though this was a blemish only felt by herself, for she was one of those clever girls who learn rapidly, and who seem to fall into a position of distinction with as much repose and dignity as if they had been born to it.

Lucy's window overlooked Piccadilly. It was a bright summer morning. The

fresh green of early June gave the Park a sylvan look that almost rivalled the Cartown pastures. The coffee-stall propped against the Park railings was an odd contrast to the wealthy surroundings. That poor little crossing-sweeper was still devouring the humble refreshment with hungry eyes. Cautiously opening her window, Lucy flung out a handful of silver, which went crashing down upon the stall. There was a sudden panic. Customers, coffee vendor, and crossing-sweeper darted upon the money, and Lucy was presently rewarded by the sight of the outcast making a very hearty breakfast, after which she went to bed and slept until long after Piccadilly had awakened to the life of another day.





CHAPTER XIV.

WILL TUNSTER VISITS THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

“**S**O this is Piccadilly, is it?” said Will Tunster, standing at the edge of the Circus pavement, with a carpet-bag in one hand and an umbrella in the other, and attired in a new velvet coat of the gamekeeper cut, and wearing almost for the first time in his life a tall hat.

“ Room for one outside,” said an omnibus conductor in reply.

“ No, thank thee, lad; I’ve had roidin’ enough for this day.”

“ Right you are,” said the conductor;

"come to town in a Pickford's wan, I dessay."

Will did not understand the cad's pleasantry. He smiled, and at the same time turned clumsily upon a street boy who insisted upon carrying his luggage.

"I tell thee no," said Will, "I don't want thee ; but thou can tell me where Portland House is—where Miss Cavendish Thornton lives, if thou likes."

"Yessir," said the boy, "show you the way?"

"No thanksta ; here's a copper for thee ; now tell me and hook it."

The boy gave Will the proper direction, and presently the mail driver of Crossley stood opposite Portland House, the architecture and general character of which he took in with all his eyes.

"Dang my buttons !" Will exclaimed, "but this is a foin spot ! Th' young queen hersen might make a mistak and fancy she'd gotten whoam here."

Will put his bag down, thrust his hands into his pockets, and lost himself in a reverie

of wonder. It was a good thing that his bugle was in his bag, and that the key of the bag was in the deepest corner of his watch-pocket, or Piccadilly would have been considerably astonished during these abstract moments of Will's with a very florid performance.

"Hey, sowdger," said Will, "can thou tell me"—

But Lord Flunkington's coachman, whom Will mistook for a sergeant of Foot, did not deign a reply.

"Oh, them's thy manners, be they? Thou'll be had up before a court-marshal if thou doesna mind, for being too polite and getting mistook for a officer one of these days."

A butcher-boy with a tray on his shoulder next attracted Will Tunster's attention.

"Hey, lad! what's thou gotten?" exclaimed Will; "a leg of mutton in a coffin! Well, I'm danged, you're rum folks in Lundun."

"Walker!" said the boy.



"He thinks I'm axin his name. Dang it, I'm a reg'lar furriner here!"

A policeman coming up, Will asked him if there were any back doors to these grand houses.

"What do you want?" asked the officer in reply.

"T' back door, I tell thee."

"Are you a servant?"

"No; art thou?"

"There's the harea bell—ring it," said the officer, pointing downwards with his thumb, and moving on with a contemptuous toss of his head.

"Well, I suppose I mun go down these steps; it's a rum thing to go into th' cellar before you get to th' house place."

Will knocked at the door, and when it was opened walked in, much to the astonishment of a couple of female servants, and evidently to the great delight of a familiar friend—old Mrs. Cantrill.

"I'm glad to see thee, lad," said the old woman, tottering towards Will with the aid of a stick; "though whether others

will be so in this grand place I cannot say."

"Niver fear," said Will.

"Ah! times is changed since my poor man died," said Mrs. Cantrill.

"For th' better, mother, for th' better."

"Aye, aye, if fine gownds and grand livin' can do owt to mak folks happy. Let me look at thee, lad! Ah, thou brings back old times to one."

The two female servants, glancing mutual signs of pity and contempt upon Mrs. Cantrill and Will, left the kitchen.

"Hey! where's them cherubums off to? they look as if they didna like one's society."

"Oh! they're not bad sort of lasses; but thou sees they've no sympathy with an old woman brought to die away from th' old house; I've heerd them say I'm an ungrateful old creature."

"Weel, weel; none of us can see wi' the same eyes. My eye! but this is a grand kitchen; it licks t' County Hotel, and is equal to th' Duke's Palace, or nigh on

it, at Chatsworth. But where's Dorothy?"

"Do you wish to see Miss Cantrill?" said one of the two domestics, returning at this moment.

"Aye, lass, I doo ; bless her heart!"

"Then come this way, sir, please."

Will followed his leader up two flights of stone steps, then across a wide hall, then down a passage, and at the end was ushered into a pretty little room, where Dorothy Cantrill, the housekeeper and friend of the lady of the house, was occupied with some fancy needlework.

"Bless thee ! And how ist thou ?" said Will, squeezing Dorothy's hand and giving her a kiss before Dorothy hardly knew where she was.

"Dear, dear, how rough you are, Will," she said, disengaging herself ; "and I declare you have been drinking brandy."

"Only i' th' coach and i' this new fangled what-do-ye-cole-it, Puffin Billy ; it was a bit cawd, thou knows, in the raw of the morning, and I just took a bottle to sup on th' road."

"And I doubt not you've supped it all."

"I dur say," said Will, laughing. "Well, was you surprised to have a letter to say I was coming?"

"Yes, indeed I was," said Dorothy.

"And are ye sorry I've come?"

"I cannot say that I am; but I wish you would not shout so, Will."

"Aye—bless thee, Dorothy, I mun shake hands agean, thou looks so bonny!" and Will shook hands so long and so vigorously that Dorothy began to think he would never leave off.

"Now, Will, take a seat, and see if you can sit still a few minutes."

"Ole right! Well, now tell me, how's Lucy?"

"Lucy!" exclaimed Dorothy. "Dear me, Will—you must not call her by that name. Don't you know she's my mistress? She is very well, thank God, and as beautiful as ever."

"Aye, she oleways wos a beauty; but what about th' old sweetheart, Mester Jacob?"

"We hear nothing of him," said Dorothy, sadly.

"Ah! it were a hawkard smash ole-together, I've heered. Nobody knaws owt about Jacob at Middleton, Cartown, or Crossley, though I could almost a swore I seed him a tramping one day; but it couldna a bin him."

"I don't know that," said Dorothy; "I fear he is in very low water somewhere."

"Him i' low watter! nowt at sort. Why that lad had enough brains for a Prime Minister. Him i' low watter, Dorothy! He's ole reight somewhere."

"Do you think so?" said Dorothy, shaking her head.

"I do. Thy mother doesn't seem to care about this high life?" said Will, interrogatively.

"No," said Dorothy; "she is always complaining. I thought it so kind of Miss Thornton, as soon as she heard the good news, to insist on our all coming together to enjoy her good fortune. And ever since she has been my mistress she has been

kindness itself, and mother has never wanted for anything, and yet not a day or night passes but she frets ; she will only sit up here now and then ; and you know, Will, I cannot be always in the servants' hall, or I should soon lose my control over them. It is a sad, sad trouble to me," and Dorothy looked as if she were going to cry.

" Well, now, I'll tell thee what I've been thinking, Dorothy. I've gotten a proposition to mak."

" Not now, not now," said Dorothy, rising. " You must have something to eat first. And then I am going to assist the maid to dress my mistress for a grand ball."

" Oh, that's the gam, is it—grand doings, eh ?"

" Yes, indeed, Will ; my mistress, they say, is the belle of the season."

" Oh ! " said Will ; " and what art thou ? Dang it, I mun shake hands agean, lass."

Whereupon Will not only shook hands again, but he made a comical pretence of kissing Dorothy, which she resented on the spot.

"Now, Will, you must behave yourself properly; you shall go into the butler's pantry and have something to eat."

"Ole reight, lass ; ole reight," said Will, who shortly afterwards found himself very comfortable, and in the society of a gentleman who knew Cartown and Crossley, which was sufficient to command the respect and regard of the mail driver.





CHAPTER XV.

DOROTHY AND MISS THORNTON COMPARE
NOTES.



FEW days after Will Tunster's visit to Portland House Dorothy found herself alone with her mistress.

"Well, Dorothy," said Lucy, "and what conclusion have you arrived at with regard to your faithful lover, Mr. William Tunster?"

"If I say I wish to leave you?" answered Dorothy, with rather surprising promptness.

"I shall be sorry," said Lucy,

"You don't seem astonished."

"I am beginning not to be surprised at anything," said Lucy.

"My mother—you know how she grieves after the old place," said Dorothy. "But I give you pain!"

"No, no," said Lucy, with a sigh; "go on."

"Will has taken the old house—they have let it to him as an especial favour, though it will not be wanted any more for a keeper, because they are going to cut a railway a quarter of a mile above it," said Dorothy, making an effort to say what she had to say "quick, and get it over," as she afterwards told Will.

Lucy saw her embarrassment, and with womanly instinct and sympathy interpreted what Dorothy further desired to say. "And you think you will say 'Yes' to Will's proposition, and leave this fine city, and settle down as a quiet country wife? You are right, Dorothy; Will deserves to have that answer; he has waited long and patiently, and you will be happy."

"God bless you!" said Dorothy, while Lucy flung her arms round the woman's neck and kissed her.

Dorothy's was a sad and romantic story in its way. In early life she had loved deeply and passionately. She was a fine handsome girl at eighteen, and her lover was a manly young fellow. She had mourned his loss for years and vowed that her heart was broken. This had been her reply to Will Tunster any time for fifteen years. At last she told Will he was welcome to half her heart. She could give nobody more than what was left, she said, and she would not give anybody else that except Will; and he said dang his buttons he would only be too glad to have it, for half a loaf was better than none.

"It will perhaps be happier for mother," said Dorothy, "for since she has had nothing to complain about, she has only grumbled the more."

"But that has not influenced you," said Lucy.

"No, I've come to like Will; he is very kind; and we shall all live together in the old house."

"Ah, my dear friend, you are right."

A gentle tap at the door.

"Come in," said Lucy.

"The Hon. Max Walton and Mr. Thornton are in the hall," said the servant.
"Mr. Thornton wishes to know if you will join them in the park."

"I will presently," said Lucy; "in half an hour."

"Yes, my lady."

"Tell John I will be ready in half an hour."

"I shall leave London," said Lucy.

"You!"

"Yes, for a couple of years at least."

"My dear Lucy," said Dorothy, with tears in her eyes, "you are not happy."

"Oh yes, I am," said Lucy, smiling sadly, "but I ought not to have come out this season; I want more education; I must study quietly; I know nothing."

"You know as much as other ladies."

"No, I do not; my music requires practice; I cannot speak French; my water colours are daubs; I am very ignorant."

"You can ride better than any lady in

the Row, and dance—Oh, how you did dance the other night! I was watching you from the gallery."

"Yes," said Lucy, "and uncle is anxious that I should marry."

Dorothy sighed.

"I know what you are thinking," said Lucy.

"I suppose it is not to be."

"What is not to be?"

"I was thinking of Jacob Martyn," said Dorothy.

"He is not worth thinking about," said Lucy, her face suddenly flushing.

"Don't say that, dear."

"Well, we will not discuss the subject," Lucy replied.

"Of course you are going to marry Mr. Max Walton."

"Not of course; there are a dozen men quite as eligible as my lord's brother," said Lucy; "but I must have a nice quiet house in the country, where I can study and make myself worthy to be a wife."

Dorothy, in thinking of Jacob, had for-

gotten for the moment how even she had given up her old lover at last. She did not know that neglect is harder to bear than absence. Dorothy had waited from year to year, expecting her lover to return to her across the treacherous sea, and at last was fain to give him up as dead, and transfer her affections to another. Lucy had waited for tidings of Jacob, and she too was tired of waiting.

If you had seen her galloping with her uncle and Mr. Max Walton an hour after her conversation with Dorothy you would have thought her happy and contented. She was the admiration of riders and pedestrians. The latter leaned upon the railings, watching her lithe figure as it disappeared among the trees; the former admired and envied her according to their sex. Sometimes she tried to chat with her uncle about a pleasant country house and two years of retirement from London; but the moment they pulled their horses into a walk under the trees they were surrounded by friends. The Hon. Max Walton was

perpetually by Lucy's side, and it was generally believed that he was the most fortunate man of the season. Now and then, however, Lucy gave gossips a little reason to doubt this, by marked flirtations with other admirers. Indeed Lucy played the part of the belle of the season to perfection, and especially as the season advanced, practice in flirtation giving additional grace and piquancy to her natural charms.

"They say you are becoming a finished flirt, Lucy," said Mr. Thornton, as they were riding home; "quite cruel and fickle, upon my honour."

"Who says so?"

"Max thinks so, I am sure," said Mr. Thornton.

Lucy burst into a merry little laugh.

"Lord Folden has made a bet against Max Walton's success."

"Success?" said Lucy, inquiringly.

"As the favourite for your hand."

"Oh, they bet on matrimonial events, do they?"

"Lord Folden bets on anything."

"How droll!" said Lucy; "I will support his judgment."

"What is the joke?" asked Max Walton, riding up.

"A bet of your brother's," said Lucy, looking across her horse's neck at the speaker, who found himself at a loss what to say in reply.

"Do *you* make bets?" asked Lucy, enjoying his confusion.

"Sometimes—I backed the Derby winner this year," said Mr. Walton.

"Oh, indeed; then you are lucky in your wagers."

"Generally, yes."

They had arrived at Mortimer House. Lucy alighted; Mr. Thornton and the Hon. Max Walton raised their hats. Lucy smiled, waved her whip, and disappeared, to meet her escort, however, again at dinner.



CHAPTER XVI.

DESCRIBES A FAMOUS FAIR, ITS PLEASURES,
PECULIARITIES, AND PASTIMES; BUT IS
MORE PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY ON
ACCOUNT OF THE UNEXPECTED MEETING
OF TWO TRAVELLERS.

WELL, dang my buttons!" said Will Tunster, who was mounted upon a sturdy cob, doing seven miles an hour on the Dinsley road, about twenty miles from Cartown.
" Gee up, Sauce Box, gee up!"
Sauce Box shook her head, and declined to gee up.

" Vary weel, owd testy, then ston still,
and I'll get off."

Sauce Box scrambled into a trot immediately.

"Thou'rt like th' paddy's pig as had to be shoved t' rong way before it ud go th' reight un."

Sauce Box shook her head and walked again.

"Weel, niver moind; we're up to him noo; and if it isna Jacob Martyn, whoy, my name's not Will Tunster, that's ole."

Will said this in such a loud voice that the object of the remark turned round, and there was a mutual recognition. Jacob, however, looked far less pleased at the meeting than Will, who slipped off Sauce Box and shook Jacob by the hand, and hoped he was well, and hearty, and stunning.

"I am very well, and glad to see you, Will," said Jacob, after a pause.

"Weel now, I shouldna a thout it; thou doesna look ower pleased, master. But niver moind, I know thou's had thy troubles and dang me, whether thou'rt glad or not I'm glad. Roide, sir, roide—I've had a

long spell, and thou'rt more fit for a horse than I am."

Jacob smiled bitterly, and said, "You forget the adage, Will, about putting a beggar on horseback."

"A beggar! Well, if thou'rt a beggar, I can only say thou deserves to be one, lad," said Will, slapping his thigh with a short ash stick.

Jacob looked angry.

"I donna care! When Dorothy said to me, only t'other day, as she feared thou might not be doin' well, I laughed at her, and towd her it was rubbish. Mester Martyn i' low watter! I said, why he'd brains enough for a Prime Minister!"

"Dorothy!" said Jacob; "where did you see Dorothy?"

"Where!—why, in Lundon, to be sure, where th' owd women go abaht i' glass cases, and th' butcher lads carry legs of mutton in coffins," said Will. "But come now, get on Sauce Box, and I'll tell thee ole abaht it."

"No, thank you," said Jacob, anxious

to hear what Will might have to disclose.

"Then dang my buttons if I'll tell thee ; and it's worth summat what I can tell ; so now then—here, gie me thy leg."

Jacob mounted ; Will took his bundle, and walked like a dutiful squire by the cavalier's stirrup.

And then Will, in a quaint roundabout way, told Jacob as much as he knew concerning Lucy's removal to London, until Jacob's thoughts ran on at such a rate that Sauce Box suddenly seemed desirous to overtake them, and away she went as fast as her little stumpy legs would carry her. But she was winded sooner than Will, who laughed heartily at her antics. When she stopped Jacob dismounted,

"I can stand this no longer !" said Jacob.

"Oh, gammon !" said Will, "you made her start off, you know."

"But that is not what I mean, Will. Did you say that Mr. Thornton was her grandfather's brother ?"

"Of course."

"And that Miss Thornton still thinks of me?"

"Aye, lad! And ud give a trifle to know where thou art."

"Will, your hand! God bless you, Will;" and Jacob returned, with interest, the squeeze he had received a few minutes before.

The people who passed looked and laughed at this strange pair making these demonstrations of regard for each other. Some of them nodded, and winked, and thought the two had begun the day's drinking bout early; for the majority of the travellers on the road that morning were on their way to Dinsley Statute Fair. Jacob had noticed many strange people by the way; he had started early from a little roadside inn, and was one of a motley crew that reminded him of an old nursery ditty which Susan Harley had sung to him when he was a child:—

"Hark! hark! the dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town,
Some in rags, some in tags,
Some in silken gown."

When Will came up, Jacob was thinking of the old song, and of some of the trials he had undergone since the last time poor Susan had called him up in the early morning to ramble in the fields with Tom Titsy and his dog.

When they reached Dinsley, Jacob and Will went to a little inn, where, Sauce Box being stabled, Will repeated his story over again, and detailed his conversation with Dorothy.

"And I'm justified, thus far, in believing that Miss Thornton is concerned about my welfare?"

"Aye, lad—but I'll go further nor that."

"You think she has made some efforts to find me out?"

"I know she has."

"And gone so far as to write to me?" said Jacob, his eyes flashing with hope.

"Yes, Dorothy said so, and she wouldna tell a lie for ole Lundon."

"And her address is Portland House, Piccadilly?"

"It is, lad."

"I will leave you for a while now, Will, if you please."

"I am goin' on a bit further this afternoon," said Will; "I'll meet you here at eight o'clock to-night, sir."

"Very good, that is an engagement," said Jacob, as he strode forth, only, however, to return almost immediately to order a bed for the night, requesting to see the room at once, that he might wash.

It was long since Jacob had been so careful about his toilet as he was upon this occasion; and although he had but a few shillings in his pocket, and his clothes were rough and shabby, his face was animated, and he looked happy and gentlemanly.

He went into the nearest bookseller's shop, purchased a sheet of note-paper, wrote the following lines upon it, and addressed the letter to Dorothy :—

"Tell Miss Thornton that Jacob Martyn still lives in the hope of some day being worthy of her; tell her that he goes about

the world with the music of the old hymn
in his heart—

“‘There is a happy land,
Far, far away.’

Tell her he has heard of the change in her fortunes, but not rightly until now ; that under the circumstances he still releases her from a girlish engagement ; but that he has not given up loving, nor hoping ; and that he prays always for the happiness of the companion of his boyhood, and thanks heaven for news of her welfare and happiness, for the continuance of which he ever prays.”

Having dropped this missive into the post-office, Jacob took a turn down a by-lane and wandered, with his thoughts, into some green meadows. After a while he came back to the inn, where he partook of a simple meal, and then sallied forth, to search for Dr. Horatio Johnson, who was in the habit of attending great fairs in all the Midland counties.

"Dinsley Stattis," as the people called it, was a holiday long looked forward to by the rural population as well as by the inhabitants of Dinsley with pleasurable and profitable anticipations; and it shall have more than a passing notice at my hands. The hiring saturnalia was still kept up, with little change in the way of business and pleasure from the days of our fathers. The adjacent villages sent to the fair servants, male and female, dressed in their finest clothes; and masters and mistresses on all kinds of beasts of burthen, and in all manner of carts, gigs, and waggons. The servants whose periods of hiring terminated that day mostly desired new masters, and the masters new servants, and so they all congregated at certain places in the market-place and stared at each other. When a farmer liked the look of a man he opened negotiations for his services, and the same process was adopted by the farmer's wife with regard to her assistants—only that in the latter case a

great deal more examination on both sides was deemed necessary. If the terms suited, and both parties were agreeable, a bargain was struck, and considered thoroughly binding by the servant accepting what was called "the fastening penny," which was presented on the principle of the recruiting shilling. The "fastening penny," however, was represented by any amount the hirer might think proper to give; a "waggon-wheel," as the five-shilling piece was called in some parts of the country, being generally considered a tolerably liberal premium. As soon as the money was accepted the engagement between the contracting parties was as binding for a year as if half a dozen lawyers had been employed to set forth the contract on as many skins of parchment. And all this matter-of-fact business went on amidst the noise and bustle of the fair; yet it was seldom that mistakes of terms or breaches of contract arose out of the statute engagements, clumsy as the system cer-

tainly appears in these days of educational progress.

The old institution is at an end. It was a relic of barbarism, no doubt. There are a few links still left between feudalism and serfdom. The School Boards will break the remaining bonds. But let us turn back to the old fair. I remember it as it were with the eyes of childhood ; I see it as Jacob Martyn saw it years ago. It is at night, when the shows are most attractive, when the excitement of gingerbread dealing, the fun of putting pennies into lotteries and getting nothing for them are at their height. It is when the naphtha begins to blaze and splutter, filling the atmosphere with a sort of illuminated mist, that the fair is "in full go." The "pale moonlight," which still heightens the beauty of Melrose Abbey, though Sir Walter never saw the sweet effect, would be fatal to the fair. The darker the better for the glory of naphtha lamps and tinselled queens and magicians. It is quite invigorating to

watch the fierceness of the competition between the rival showmen.

First, there is the dwarf, perpetually ringing his bell out of the first story front, and his proprietor yelling the proportions of "the wonderfulest fe-nomenah as ever appeared afore the British public, at the low charge of *one* penny."

Then there is the red-faced gentleman belonging to the waxwork, who seems to be shouting himself into fits of apoplexy, in an over-weening desire to make known to those who are wavering betwixt "Daniel in the lions' den, as natural as life," and "the wonderfulest dwarf halive," "that this hexhibition of mechanical figures challenges the world for variety and perfection, avin ad the honour of happearin afore nearly all the crowned eads of Europe."

Above all, there is Bumwell's Royal Collection of Animated Nature, towering up into the darkness, with florid delineations of lions, tigers, birds, and reptiles, occupied in the amusements of their native woods, or being mildly inspected, in a semi-circle

of cages, by the reigning monarch and several persons in military uniform. Bumwell's have a band of music, which the proprietor of "The Temple of Magic" is endeavouring to drown with a drum and barrel organ, assisted by the band belonging to the giant and the boa constrictor—two trombones, a cornet, and drum—which appears to be fully determined to drown everybody else or perish in the attempt; while the crowd below, tantalised by the half-drawing of a curtain exhibiting a sort of monster Catherine wheel, spinning before a piece of looking-glass, dash up the steps, and disappear behind two very green doors, ornamented with a very bright knocker.

In the midst of these exhibitions, surrounded by a host of other equally noisy establishments, including peep-show delineations of Waterloo and the latest murder, is situated the booth of the "Nottingham Pet," a gentleman of somewhat short stature and battered aspect, who, elevating himself on a temporary platform, proclaims,

in a husky voice, " You've the real thing here, gents—no infernal drums an trumpets to dror yer in, and ease yer of yer money —it's the nut—the *nut*, gents, wot you has here in all its perfectshun—the *nut*, gents, *the nut*." This choice oration is accompanied with a beating of the head every time that piece of human anatomy is alluded to as " the nut," and by the time the " Pet " has exhausted his speech, and made himself much hoarser than when he commenced it, another of the same calibre of " nuts," and rejoicing in a similar " gin and fog " organ, invites " them as loves the noble skience of self-defence " to lose no time in witnessing " a set-to atween the renowned Nottenham Pet, which is backed for a undred pund a side to fight the ' Tipton ' and ' Jimmy, the Black,' which has had the honour of oldin the champion belt of the light weights, and which is also backed to fight a battle in the ensooing munth."

Leaving " the real thing," with its gloves and its flat noses, we come to something of

a more imaginary character—"The Theatre Royal." The performers, in a remarkable variety of costumes, are pacing the platform, and just as we arrive at the steps it is announced that the company will have "one dance at the exterior of the house prior to the commencement of Shakespeare's *im-mortal* tradegee of 'King Richard the Third'—by the whole strength of the company, after which a Grand Tragical, Magical, Comical, Laughable Pantomime,—only twopence to the gallery ;" all this being accompanied with the most positive assurance that there will only be three or four more performances this evening, and that the house is elegantly illuminated, and heated with a patent stove. Thereupon the whole strength of the company—a hump-backed individual in a black velvet coat and feathers; two or three royal looking swells of a past age, in various stages of seediness; two children (shortly to be murdered in the tower), shivering in scanty garments and buckled shoes; and divers ladies, in long robes of all colours,

together with short robes, for the pantomime, of the most gauzy and gaudy character, begin to dance ; and after a few fantastical turns, the men severally fold their arms, the women raise their dresses, and at the pantomimic beckoning of a clown, who tumbles head over heels across the stage, and then runs back again, they all disappear to commence their interpretation of Shakespeare's "Life and Death of King Richard the Third."

Moving a little way from the noise of the shows, we find ourselves in a maze of stalls, shooting galleries, roundabouts, swinging boats, bazaars, and "good stuff" booths, and wherever we go, gingerbread and nuts seem to be the staple luxuries ; indeed, the fair is redolent of gingerbread, and in whatever other occupation they may be engaged, girls and boys, and men and women, are all cracking nuts, which are offered and sold to them as "real Barsaloniess." Here a group throngs round a ballad singer, who sells his ditties by the yard. Close by, a bustling individual, with

a sort of dumb clock, painted in stripes of red, and blue, and black, and green, with a perpetually moving long hand, cries, "Now, gents, try your luck again—faint heart never won fair lady—nothing ventur, nothing win—one down, who makes two?—I'll bet even on the red;" and smock-frocked fellows gape at his volubility, while his volubility wins their pence by handfuls.

In close proximity, all who are suffering from pains in the head or back, nervous debility, spasms, wind, gout, or any other complaint, are requested to try the infallible pill, the recipe of which was procured from an officer in "the Royal Artilleree," who had been in the habit of curing whole regiments with the recipe, and who had only been induced to part with the same on account of the humble individual who now possessed it having saved that officer's life when set upon by four blacks in the great Sikh war—two night and morning would be found efficacious in all disorders, and the charge for one box was about one-third of the price which would have to be paid

for a single pill in any respectable druggist's in town—and why? because the seller was not compelled to pay rent and taxes, and because he gave the public the benefit of his not keeping a large shop with numerous assistants.

These arguments are found to be irresistible, especially with the women; as are also, with numerous men, the jokes of "Cheap Jack," who is continually trying to break a joiner's saw, and expressing an emphatic opinion that nobody ever saw such a saw as that saw, which said saw was as elastic as india-rubber, and as sharp as a razor, and if the axe he now held in his hand—and which he would neither ask five, four, three, two, nor one shilling for, but would sell at the low and ruinous figure of tenpence—was placed at the root of a tree that night, the timber would be found felled and ready for carting the next morning. Above all this you hear a mingled hubbub of cries, made up of "Three a penny, three a penny," "Taste 'em and try 'em 'afore you buy 'em," "Try your weight,

gents, try your weight," "Strong leather laces," "Only a penny in the lucky bag," "The real Turkey rhoobarb, only four pensh de ounsh, two pensh de half ounsh, and as low as a penny de quarter of an ounsh," "Now, my little dears, who rides, who rides?" "Real Grantham gingerbread, only sixpence a pound," "Here you are, the real brandy snap, the real brandy snap;"

"We are poor folk from Manchester,
An we've gott'n no work to do;"

and a hundred other inducements to buy or give, interspersed now and then with a deep bass entreaty to "Pity the poor blind!"

It is a source of pleasure and amusement to watch the children, among all the noise and glitter, and to see them struggling home under loads of toys, blowing their trumpets and beating their drums, and talking about their "fairings," and bedaubing their cheeks with gingerbread; and to see the rough country lovers taking their sweet-

hearts to the shows, and buying them nuts ; and to see the tradesmen busy in their shops round the market-place ; and to hear, as you may sometimes, the parish bells ringing joyous peals, that fill up the smallest lull in the noise of the fair, and make the holiday clamour complete.

Jacob wandered among these familiar scenes, now lingering here, now lingering there, searching for Dr. Johnson, and listening for his voice among the Babel of cries of the fair. But nowhere could be found Mrs. Titsy's famous lodger. Jacob was, however, interested in one discovery. He recognised the two waggons which had formed part of the gipsy settlement. One of them attracted his particular attention. It was the "Cheap Jack's" establishment, at the back of which, handing out the goods, was the "Baron" of the encampment. Julius, he thought, was playing a dangerous game if he had really committed any serious crime ; but his disguise was certainly a most complete one—so complete that Jacob doubted, after all, whether this

was the Baron or not, and he would never for a moment have dreamed of that strange figure being Jennings had he not met with the Baron as I have previously described.

He was wondering what crime his late father's factotum could possibly have committed, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he found himself face to face with Dr. Horatio Johnson. A hearty greeting on both sides followed the recognition.

"I have been looking for you everywhere, listening for you in every corner of the fair," said Jacob.

"My assistant is here to-day," said Mr. Johnson. "A vulgar antagonist has sprung up who talks about having saved an officer in the Sikh war; he has planted himself opposite my place in several towns, and wherever he has done so I encounter him with my assistant. Did you not notice my stall?"

"No! Looking for you I naturally took little notice of any establishment where I did not see you, though I did observe the

Sikh-war-man, because he wore regiments, and shouted louder than anybody else."

"That's the fellow—well, never mind him—come along."

"I have an engagement at eight," said Jacob, "and it must be nearly that time now."

"So have I," said the Doctor, "but mine is one in which you may participate; I am going to sup with a gentleman whom you know very well."

"I have met a fellow to-day whom I knew years ago," said Jacob, "and I have promised to meet him at eight."

"Not at the Grove?" said the Doctor.

"No," said Jacob.

"Well, I'll let you off for half an hour, on one condition," said the Doctor, "that you bring your friend, and come to No. 6, The Grove (it is close at hand), to supper."

"You have my word," said Jacob.

"Your hand upon it," said the Doctor, "and I am delighted, sir—delighted to

have met you again. I rely on your coming to the Grove."

And the Doctor disappeared among the crowd.





CHAPTER XVII.

“WELCOME TO THE GROVE!”

MR. WINDGATE WILLIAMS, the accredited editor of the *Dinsley Courant*, lodged in a pleasant part of the county town called the Grove, whither Dr. Horatio Johnson hurried, after leaving Jacob in the fair. Opening a little ornamental gate he passed through a small square garden, and knocked at a respectable-looking door.

“Yethir, he ith in,” said a young woman with black hair, blinking eyes, and prominent teeth.

“Walk in, sir,” thereupon said a bland, patronising, oily voice from a side door,

accompanied by powerful indications of fried onions.

The voice belonged to the landlady, who was the mother of the interesting girl with the lisp, the blinking black eyes and the prominent teeth.

"Joanna, show the gentleman upstairs."

Joanna, who dashed about the house, Windgate Williams had said, like a lost thunderbolt, took two stairs at a time, and beckoning the Doctor to follow, was in another moment hammering at the door of Mr. Williams.

"Aha, my boy—half an hour before your time; 'but no matter, ah,' as the heavy drama men say; glad to see you—sit down, sit down."

"I have taken a liberty with your hospitality," said Mr. Johnson.

"Not at all, Doctor—don't see it—hang it—I invited you to meet my friend Crooks—"

"But I have invited two other friends to accompany me—at least, a friend and his friend," said the Doctor, interrupting Mr. Williams.

"The deuce you have," said Williams, knitting his brows, and ringing a bell.

Before the Doctor had time to reply, the thunderbolt rolled into the room, and stared at Mr. Williams.

"Send your mother here."

The thunderbolt rolled down stairs.

"Queer girl that," said Williams; "I call her Jumbo—her name's Joanna—Jumbo the lost thunderbolt, sir—I contemplate writing a humorous song about her."

"Mrs. Smick—my friend Dr. Johnson."

The Doctor bowed to a fat, smiling, good-natured looking woman of fifty.

"What have we for supper to-night, Mrs. Smick?"

"Oh, plenty, sir—never fear."

"Plenty for five?"

"I thought it was three which I were a saying to Joanna when——"

"We have been into the highways and by-ways, mam—result is two more," said Mr. Williams, interrupting his landlady.

"Ho!" said Mrs. Smick, thoughtfully; "couple of ducks and a steak—ha!—we'll

put on a little more steak, sir, which, when the pertaties is considered——”

“Very well—very well—all right,” said Mr. Williams, and the lady bowed herself out of the room.

“You seem doleful, Doctor—come now, none of that—it will not be tolerated to-night—away with melancholy!—you’re thinking about that sanguinary affair which is to be tried at the assizes—he’s all right, sir—the lad’s all right—I’ve told you so before—come now—for to-night we’ll merry be, et cetera.”

With these disjointed remarks, dropping from him during journeys round the room, made for the ostensible purpose of putting papers and books and other litter out of the way, Mr. Williams endeavoured to raise the Doctor’s spirits, finally extracting from him a promise that he would, for that night at least, confine himself to the pleasures of social life, and that he would in no way mar the hilarity of the company by thrusting a murder under its nose.

Then Jumbo rushed into the room and

laid the cloth, seeming to look everywhere at once and to be there at the same time ; she was followed by a short, stout, closely-cropped gentleman, who wore spectacles, and "snuffed."

" My friend Mr. Ebenezer Crooks, well known for his dramatic readings and his eloquent lectures—Dr. Horatio Johnson of Middleton-on the-Water—glad to have the pleasure of introducing you," said Mr. Williams.

" And here comes our other friends—why—no—yes—yes—it is—Mr. Jacob Martyn—delighted to see you, sir—Dr. Johnson, this is a pleasure I did not expect—Mr. Crooks, allow me to introduce you to my friend Mr. Martyn."

Will Tunster stood smiling near the door, swinging his hat in one hand while he rubbed his nose with the other.

" This is my friend Mr. William Tunster, farmer."

" Noa, not yet," said Will, bowing ; "not farmer yet—hopes to be in two or three weeks."

"Welcome to the Grove!" said Mr. Williams, theatrically.

"Sur, to you," replied Will, smiling.

The supper was speedily brought up, filling the table with good things and the room with the perfume and odour thereof.

The party ate and talked, and drank each other's healths. The fair, the shows, the new company at the Dinsley Theatre, the recent lectures of Mr. Crooks, the smart article in the *Courant* on the condition of the High Street, furnished varied and interesting topics of conversation.

"Talk of the state of the High Street," said Mr. Crooks, in a deep bass voice, which gradually rose to a baritone, and then to a tenor, "I can tell you—ah, ah—a good joke—the reason Williams objects to—"

"Now, come—don't expose me—that is too bad," interrupted Mr. Williams, with perfect good humour.

"That was the foundation of the article—you know it was now," said Mr. Crooks,

in his tenor notes, and adding in a deep bass, "It's too good to be lost. I must tell the story. Williams *avec de l'eau-de-vie* in *l'estomac*, was coming home, leaning on my arm. 'Confound those Lighting and Paving Commissioners,' said *mon ami*, reeling along—'what a dreadful state the streets are in, to be sure—I'll pitch into 'em next week,' and he did *ad nauseam*;" and then Mr. Crooks paused to say, in a falsetto shriek, "The streets were all right, gentlemen; it was the editor who was all wrong."

Everybody laughed except Will Tunster. After quietly laying down his knife and fork, he turned round to the gentleman in the spectacles, and said, "I hope I'm not goin' to be rude, sir—Mr. Snooks; but if you have anything to say as you object to my hearing, I'll leave th' room."

Mr. Crooks's reply was an inquiring glance at the company.

"There's no need to stare; ole I've gotten to say is, that I haven't had a forrin edication, and if there's to be ony parly-

vooin, if it's the same to you, sir, I shall be glad if you'll tell us the English on it after."

The truth is, Mr. Crooks being a local lecturer was continually on the watch to impress the local ignoramuses among whom he managed to scrape together a living. Unlike Mr. Johnson, he did not confine himself to a single Latin quotation ; but he larded his pompous talk with scraps of all the tongues he had come across. Windgate Williams swears he heard the impostor in his closing peroration to a scientific lecture tell his gaping pit-village audience that *tempus fugit in vino veritas, usque ad nau-seam* must be the end of all who did not look progress fairly in the face, but he would beg them to join him in hoping that the *mauvais sujet, ad horrendum, tout ensemble*, would be the lot of that glorious country which placing its *semper idem* on the wave of time had sailed to the highest pinnacles of a never dying future.

But this is by the way.

Mr. Crooks was angry at honest Will

Tunster's protest, and would have at once given that presumptuous mail driver a moral rebuke, had not Williams verbally stepped between the two with "All right, sir—all right—I'll interpret for you, Mr. Tunster, if necessary—but I claim your attention for a moment—I must have my revenge—you forgot to tell our friends, Mr. Crooks, what *you* did on that same evening when I had taken too much brandy, as you say."

"Did! I went home to Mrs. Crooks," said the lecturer,

"Oh, no," said Mr. Williams, laughing; "he was here all night, I assure you—came home with me—we toasted each other in this very room till midnight—then my friend left—half an hour afterwards thought I heard a noise in the backyard—sober as a judge I was—went out with a light—'No more, thank you—no more, thank you,' said a voice, in a sort of bubble-and-squeak style—I looked everywhere—still the voice 'No more (bubble), thank you,' as if a man were speaking in the act of

drinking—at last I thought of the duck-pond, two yards by three, about a foot deep—turned the light in that direction—Crooks lying on his back, with the water bubbling into his mouth whenever he moved—at every bubble he said, ‘No more, thank you’—ah, ah—thinking, no doubt, somebody was insisting upon his drinking eau-de-vie—I beg your pardon, Mr. Tunster—brandy, sir, brandy.”

Will Tunster leaned back in his chair and roared with laughter.

“Dang my buttons, but that’s a good un—well done, lecturer.”

“Go away, sir—don’t be so familiar,” said Crooks, wiping his spectacles, and glaring without them at Will.

“Familiar! That’s good! I’ve always paid to hear thee lecture! But dang it, Mr. Williams has made me laugh for nowt more than thou ever did for twopence.”

“Don’t be angry, Crooks—I knew a fellow once who got awfully drunk, and then throwing himself upon the floor bemoaning his incapacity to imbibe further, hiccupped,

'I can't drink any more, throw the rest over me.' Now, gentlemen, I am not going to indulge you to that extent ; but I can offer you some very fine old whisky, and I hope you will not spare it."

"Bravo !" said Will, and "Hear, hear" the Doctor.

The steaming punch which Mrs. Smick brewed after supper, and brought up in an old-fashioned china bowl, put everybody into excellent humour, except the Doctor, who was vainly struggling against gloomy forebodings. But even Horatio smiled genially when Mr. Windgate Williams handed him a long pipe and bade him smoke his cares away. Jacob was in high spirits ; the news of the morning had almost turned his head ; he fired off jokes at everybody, to the evident delight and admiration of Mr. Williams. Will Tunster laughed and dangled his buttons at Jacob's wit, and Mr. Crooks, who had been accustomed to talk a great deal, sat uncomfortably in his seat, and jerked out some random remarks whenever an opportunity occurred. These opportunities

were few indeed, for Williams was also fond of talking, and he rattled away at such a high-pressure rate that Will Tunster laughed more at the manner of his speech than at the matter thereof.

At length, a question arising as to the best method of brewing punch, Mr. Crooks made it a peg on which to hang the heads of a lecture on chemistry which he had recently delivered ; and as his lectures were always dribbling from him, he threw off, with scientific garrulity, the compilation of several volumes of facts and theories about matter, its physical properties, the attraction which determines chemical combination, single elective affinity, changes produced by chemical action, chemical nomenclature, theories of combustion, &c.

Meanwhile Mr. Williams and the Doctor entered into a confidential chat ; the end of which appeared to be very satisfactory to the Doctor, who smiled benignantly upon Jacob. The latter, while pretending to be listening to Mr. Crooks, was occupied with his own thoughts.

"It's a danged good lecture. I've heard some on it before at Crossley Institute. Give us thy hand, lecturer ; thou art not such a bad sort when thou doesn't speak in foreign languages."

The lecturer smiled and took Will's hand, whereupon Mr. Williams in a short speech proposed Will's health. "And the future Mrs. Tunster" added the Doctor from the midst of a cloud of smoke.

Will said he was very much obliged to all, and begged to drink their good healths in return ; as for t' future Mrs. Tunster, he was sure that if she know'd he was in such edicated company and that her health had been drunk, she would like him to say "Thank you, same to you" on her behalf, and he therefore begged to do it ; and he might inform them that Mrs. Tunster wasn't such a myth as the Doctor seemed to think, as he laughed so much abaht it ; however, he would not sit down without giving them th' health of Mr. Doctor Johnson and *his* good leddy.

The Doctor replied—all my readers will

readily believe that he did so genially and in appropriate terms—and then toasts and sentiments and songs became the order of the evening.

Mr. Crooks made sundry efforts to introduce a discussion upon astronomy, and failing to secure any attention for his second-hand views of the Atomic theory, or the phenomena of Affinity, he laid down his pipe and recited the well-known scene from "Speed the Plough," where the Farmer tries to make himself agreeable to Sir Philip Blandford, at the conclusion of which Will Tunster applauded most lustily; and Mr. Crooks, steaming with the exertion and delighted with his own performance, said to Will, "*Vous chantez?*"

"Sha'n't I?—by jingo, but I will;" and the countryman rattled his glass and cheered again, and proclaimed it as his opinion that Mr. Crooks was a real good un.

"Mr. Crooks would like to hear you sing," said Mr. Williams.

"Well than, dang me, as I havn't th'

oud bugle here, he shall ; it's mony a long day sin' I've sung, but there's an oud song of the same tune as 'Mary on the banks of sweet Dundee,' and a bit like it, as I heered ith' fair, which, as Mester Crooks has gin us a bit in th' farmin loine, and as I'm goin to be sommat i' that way, maybe you'll loike."

Will therefore stretched out his legs, unbuttoned his plush waistcoat, and bellowed, in a minor key, the following ditty :—

Young William was a ploughboy
In famous Lincolnshire :
Young William was a ploughboy
For more than fower long year ;
Till by the pressgang he was ta'en—
As I will tell to you—
Before that he'd arrivéd at
The age of twenty-two.

Young Mary was a milkmaid !
In that same famous shire :
Young Mary was a milkmaid
For more than fower long year.
She loved the gay young ploughboy,
Whistling behind his team ;
When to their joys an end was put,
As quickly it shall seem.

Ben Swasher was a captain,
All dress'd out in blue :
Ben Swasher was a captain
Of a famous pressgang crew.
Says he—"We'll have young William,
The ploughboy brave and true ;"
And on they marched to capture him,
Which quickly they did rue.

The ploughboy they did lure away,
By a message from his love :
The ploughboy they did lure away,
Into a lonely grove ;
And there out dashed upon him,
The pressgang brutally,
And Will did wage a deadly fight,
All for his liberty.

Before young William was secured,
Two men had gasped their last :
Before young William was secured,
Two men had breathed their last.
But William he was put on board
A ship that very night,
And sail'd away unto the wars
Before the morning light.

Now the Captain came to Mary,
For to make love to her ;
He came unto young Mary.
With precious gold a store ;
But when she knew her ploughboy
A press'd man was he,

She seized his betrayer,
And stabbed him mortally.

Young William he returnéd,
In about ten year, or more :
Young William he returnéd,
All from a foreign shore.
They pointed to the churchyard,
And there he found his bride ;
And over her a stone, which said—
“ Of a broken heart she died.”

Young William heav'd a deep sigh,
This painful sight to see ;
Young William heav'd a deep sigh,
A deep sigh heaved he ;—
“ Oh Mary ! dearest Mary !
With you I'll quickly lie,”
And then upon the cold, cold ground,
He laid him down to die.

It was now past midnight. The Thunderbolt had twice rolled in to see if Mr. Windgate Williams would require anything more, as her mawther was going to bed. Mr. Crooks fell asleep over Will Tunster's song, and Jacob at its conclusion thought it was time to bring their pleasant evening to an end. Mr. Williams insisted upon their all having one nip at parting, and

further, taking the hands of Jacob and the Doctor, commenced to sing, very piano, the opening of "Auld Lang Syne," which the party struggled through much to Will Tunster's satisfaction, who vowed they were all good uns, and his only regret was that he had not brought th' oud bugle.

When Jacob reached the inn where he had ordered a bed for the night, he found a note waiting for him. It was evidently written in a disguised hand ; nobody knew who had left it ; but it was to be given "to the good-looking young man who had ordered a bed there, and who was in the house with a countryman in the morning." Jacob opened the note, and read as follows : —" I saw you in the fair to-day ; keep my secret as you have sworn. Tom Titsy is innocent, and if the worst comes to the worst, *I* will save him."



CHAPTER XVIII.

JACOB'S ASPIRATIONS AND WILLIAMS'S ADVENTURES.

GN the day following the supper party at the Grove, Jacob learnt what the readers of this history already know of the events which had occurred at Middleton since the day when he turned his back upon it, as he thought, for ever. His wanderings upon the earth had been strange and purposeless, or he would have been informed of what had transpired. Some of Jacob's notes of these early days remind me a little of the wanderings of De Quincey before his arrival in London. He had been altogether out of beaten paths, and in the summer months had more than

once slept in the open fields, sheltered by some luxuriant hedge-row or fragrant stack of newly-mown hay.

Mr. Johnson informed Jacob that Tom Titsy had been apprehended as an accomplice of Magar's. The police, he said, had taken this extraordinary step on account of some words which Magar had let fall in his cell, and because an old watchman remembered seeing Tom and Magar together on the morning of the murder. This watchman had seen Tom out late at night, and had also a strange story to tell of the same voice which said "All right" to him in Magar's mill when the murder was, no doubt, being committed, saying "All right" when he tried Mrs. Titsy's door, two nights afterwards. That might have been Jennings's voice, the Doctor said; but the police were determined to have some one else in the dock if they could not catch the other villain, and so they had pounced upon poor Tom, who seemed born to be unfortunate. The Doctor was satisfied that Tom would be acquitted, but he was very

much troubled on account of the misery which the event had brought upon Mrs. Titsy and poor Susan Harley.

"However," continued the Doctor, "I have a scheme in my head concerning them, which shall be explained in due course. The first thing I want is to make a proposition to you. By-the-by, has Mr. Tunster left Dinsley?"

"He went away early," said Jacob; "he is furnishing, and otherwise preparing for matrimony. He made many mysterious purchases here yesterday. His father has left him a little fortune, and he is going to make good use of it."

"Well, it seems to me," continued the Doctor, "that the time has come for a change in all our fortunes, sir. Fate will work in its own way, and if we do not take up our proper positions until we are fairly thrust into them by sheer good luck, we may wait until the crack of doom."

"A true philosopher," said Mr. Windgate Williams, at whose lodgings the reader will already have concluded this conversa-

tion took place—"looks on the bright side of things—has faith in truth—he will win, sir, he will win."

"Now, Mister Jacob, I know you are proud, but you are not too proud to take the first step on the ladder up which you may mount to fortune ; Mr. Williams offers to put your foot upon it. *Moniti meliora sequamur !* I beg your pardon, gentlemen —habit ! Forgive the lapsus, and let us get on."

Jacob looked anxiously from one to the other. He had been racking his brain, half through the night, wondering how he might fairly start in life, and secure the prize which hope whispered might still be his.

"This is it," said Mr. Williams ; "I admired you, sir, at Middleton. I had the greatest esteem for your father—fine man, sir ; noble-hearted creature. Mr. Johnson has told me of your great merits ; has spoken of the intention of your father to make a journalist of you ; and in the most handsome manner has placed a sum of

money in my hands (he said you would be too proud to take it) for the purchase of books or for other purposes ; and, in fine, sir, the reportership and sub-editorship of the *Courant* is vacant, and the appointment is yours if you will take it."

If he would take it ! Jacob's heart swelled with gratitude ; he felt that the ice was thawing rapidly now, and that the sunshine was brightening the future. He would only accept the Doctor's pecuniary assistance as a loan, to which his kind-hearted friend consented. It was arranged that Jacob should lodge with Mr. Williams, who delicately hinted that Mr. Snippers in the High Street was the best tailor in Dinsley. Jacob called upon that eminent clothier in the afternoon, and in the evening took up his quarters at Mrs. Smick's in the Grove.

The Doctor visited him there, and announced his intention of astonishing his friends. He thereupon surprised Jacob with a declaration.

"Jacob, Mr. Martyn, I am a capitalist ;

I could drive my own carriage, sir, if I chose."

"Indeed," replied Jacob. "I am delighted to hear it; you always did drive your gig, which constitutes a gentleman nowadays, and entitles a man to be writ down esquire."

"I could drive my brougham, sir, and keep my coachman; I am a capitalist. *Moniti*—I beg your pardon, Mr. Martyn."

"Since we *are* talking of money, Mr. Johnson," said Jacob, "let it be distinctly understood upon what terms I accept your pecuniary aid."

"Yes, yes, as a loan, to be returned with interest—all right—pray do not mention it."

"Mr. Johnson, you are too good; I accept your aid, and thank you heartily."

Jacob was going to add "And I will repay you promptly;" but he kept that to himself. Every man who borrows money has that promise ready upon his tongue. A week previously he would not have ac-

cepted the Doctor's money ; his pride was then above all assistance ; nor would he have consented to settle down to work ; Mr. Spawling's exordium on a certain memorable morning had long since been forgotten ; but just now Jacob's better memories came back to him. He still loved Lucy. He had not wiped out her image from his heart as he had vowed he would on that bitter winter day at Cartown. It is easy to say we will do this and that ; but neither love nor hate is easily wiped out. As for obliterating the image of Lucy from his memory, Jacob might as well have tried to forget his own history. This he did not desire, for he was very egotistical in his troubles. If he had suffered martyrdom, he did not forget, poor fellow, to credit himself with the pain. He had set himself the part of the misanthrope. In a common-place book which he carried in his pocket he had satirised some of Mr. Spawling's philosophy. He had done his disappointment into epigrams and snatches of verse. The verses to which he had sneer-

ingly alluded in his strange interview with Jennings contained a piece of cynicism bitter enough for old Nickleby, or Old Nick himself, for that matter.

Jacob was master of many of Rochefoucauld's maxims ; he knew nearly all the proverbs that have been launched against women and love. Hazlitt's maxims, which he had found in a country library, were quite a glorious discovery for him ; he revelled in them. He was especially struck with the author's knowledge of women. Years afterwards, when he read the "Liber Amoris," he understood why the lodger under the spells of "L. S." seemed entitled to say a few hard words of the sex. And yet there were times when the would-be cynic stretched forth his arms in imagination to Lucy ; he often walked in memory through the fields at Cartown ; he heard the factory hymn in his dreams ; he prayed Heaven to give Lucy back to him, and, with her, peace and hope, and a noble ambition. If Jacob could only have seen his angel in the Row, smiling at the

gay nothings of a lively young guardsman !

Had not all the world been against him ? Poverty and pride are very unreasonable. Jacob ought to have remembered the conduct of Squire Northcotes. There was a shoulder to lean upon. That eccentric gentleman would have lent any amount of practical aid to Jacob in his need. If the absurd young fellow had only looked up the squire, he might have been his heir—who knows ? No ; Jacob only thought of Fate's unkindest blows ; his mind dwelt upon the death of his father, the cruel scattering of their household gods, his humiliation, the letters which he never received from his friends, whom he suspected of deserting him in his troubles, whereas he himself was the only deserter ; above all, that deserted cottage at Cartown. Miriam's story of Lucy's departure had haunted him day and night. But the ice and snow began to melt before Will Tunster's words on the road to Dinsley fair ; and then he remembered Spen's injunction to address him

at the General Post Office, London. He hardly cared to own to himself how wrong he had been in suspecting Lucy, how unworthy he was of her love, how ready he had been to think ill of her, how easily he had forgotten her last tender words ; he was heartily ashamed of himself, and he resolved, without making any vows about the matter, to retrieve his position. At that moment there was no height that seemed to him inaccessible.

Many a night, when Windgate Williams was asleep, and the Thunderbolt was warm in bed ; when Mrs. Smick was dreaming of her dear departed (" which he were a captain in the merchant service "), and the other lodgers in the Grove were oblivious of both time and money, there was a light in Jacob's bedroom, where the editor's lieutenant had set up a private desk at which to burn the midnight oil. In the watches of the night Jacob believed he was preparing for a coming day. Poor Jacob ! we have all built our castles in the air. How few of them have represented hopes destined to be realised !

Jacob's castles, we may be sure, were gorgeous palaces ; for it was his nature to run into extremes. But he did not wait for the palaces to grow, he worked like a nigger at the foundations.

" Well, my boy," said Mr. Williams, a few weeks after Jacob's appointment on the *Courant* and his residence at the Grove, " You're getting on—made a good start, sir—you'll do, Jacob, you'll do, my boy—my friend Beswick, who now shakes London to its centre two or three times a week in the *Leviathan*, began as you have, at the bottom of the ladder—there are prizes to be won, sir ; you'll win one ; but sitting up half the night will not do—be careful—nurse your powers, don't overtax them. Burning the midnight oil is all very well, but it exhausts the human lamp, sir."

" You do not know why I am so anxious to improve my position ; some day I will tell you," replied Jacob, stirring the fire and looking down a long street of burning houses, which the poker left behind it.

" Oh, it's a case of love, I dare say :

young fellows like you, hot and sanguine, always get violently in love and set about making their fortunes at twenty, that they may be married at twenty-one—saw you looking at that pretty girl over the way—eh? is that the flame?"

Mr. Williams was gracefully reclining on a sofa, with one leg on the back, and contemplating Jacob through the smoke of a cheap and a strong cigar.

"No," said Jacob, "but I have occasionally noticed rather a pretty girl at the window."

"Yes, I dare say—too short, but rather nice though—soft blue eyes. Was nearly in love once myself, Jacob—was editing the *London Smasher* at the time—going to the office one afternoon, just passing through Temple Bar, became conscious that a magnificent creature, in a gorgeous turn-out, was gazing at me—two flunkeys behind—I returned her smile—raised my hat—she beckoned, check string was pulled, and Love and Beauty were wheeled away to Mayfair—magnificent mansion—she had

noticed me at the opera—love at first sight—she had adored me long!—would I be hers? Yes, by Jove, I would; she rung the bell—for the priest I expected. Show this gentleman to the door, and kick him down the steps if necessary. Ah! ah! turned out to be an eccentric lady of great wealth, who had once been jilted—revenged herself by befooling all the handsomest men in town, ahem!"

"A very good story," said Jacob, "especially for the Marines, as you sometimes say."

"Is it, sir? Thank you for nothing; but let me advise your not going in for scepticism. Extraordinary place, London—as you'll know some day. Marvellous incidents occurring there every day—used me up in seven years—just that time since my cousin Webster, who wrote that work which created such a stir two years ago, said, 'Windgate, my boy, you're dishing yourself up—go into the country and recruit'—did so, and, by Jupiter, have been in the country ever since. Should hardly

know London now, I suppose, or be known at my club. How time flies!" and Mr. Williams put his other leg upon the sofa-back.

"Do you know any of the London publishers well?" Jacob inquired.

"Do I know them? Rather! Was bored out of my life to write a novel for Sharmans—worried to death to edit Ginghem's Magazine—didn't care for that sort of thing—contributed occasionally to the mag., and wrote my three leaders a week—quite enough for a lazy beggar like me. All the publishers in the Row, and out of it, know Windgate Williams—did you never see my 'Topsy Turvey; or Out of Sight,' published by—let me see—was it by Ginghem or Sharmans?—Ginghem, of course—haven't a copy now—shall come across one some day."

"I should like to see it," said Jacob, wondering at his friend's garrulity.

"Oh, yes, I can see—you don't believe half I say; just like you young fellows. I forgive you—a man who doesn't know

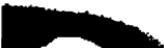


London knows nothing. London is the epitome of the world, the encyclopædia of life, the centre of fashion, the hot-bed of genius, the arena where wit tilts with wit, the scene of all the greatest tragedies and comedies and farces in real life. By Jove, sir, I don't wonder you don't believe all I say. You have read a good deal, Jacob—know something of classic stories, fairy tales, and all that sort of thing—none of them comes up to London. Bagdad, and Athens, and the Flying Island, Rome, Pompeii, Constantinople, Aladdin's Palace, Pandemonium, and Paris, all rolled into one, would not make a London."

"I did not say I doubted your word, Mr. Williams."

"No, but you looked it. I forgive you; no offence, my boy—truth being stranger than fiction, no wonder that one is mistaken for the other. Some day I shall be telling another young fellow, perhaps, about my engagement at Middleton, and how it ended. He'll not believe it. By Janus and his gates, sir, it's a wonder I'm not a

prisoner now for manslaughter ! You remember the grand charge up the steps. I never hit a fellow with such *malice prepense* as I hit that minion of the fiend Gripps—it reminded me of an affair in which I was concerned some years ago. It was a grand night at Vauxhall ; I was dancing with a very fine girl—swell of the first water annoyed me continually—put his eye-glass perpetually upon both of us—seemed to have known the lady before. This went on for some time, when he was joined by another fellow. I ordered lobster salad for myself and friend—they passed the little harbour and sneered—lost my patience at last—dashed out upon them—thrashed them both, within an inch of their lives—nearly killed three waiters who interfered, and broke my arm against a policeman's head —was laid up six weeks—fined a pile of money, and was afterwards presented with a purse and a pair of embroidered boxing gloves, at an oyster supper, by a select party who admired my courage and hated the swells I'd beaten, for the brutal snobs



turned out to have been a perpetual nuisance at Vauxhall."

" You have had many strange adventures," said Jacob.

" Many—you are right! The country is very tame after London. You live in the presence of the world down here, like fish in a glass globe—gold fish from China—mentioned first by Pepys—one of his curious notes—great book, Pepys'. But one has quiet in the country, that is a great thing; and after a fellow's done everything and seen everything there is balm for the shattered mind in a country town. Of course a fellow is thrown away here; but what of that?—a sucked orange is good for nothing else. When I was your age I lived as much in a day as we live here in ten years. But no matter; such is life—which it is uncertain and has its troubles, as Mrs. Smick says."

Mr. Williams tossed up his slippers toes, and laid his head upon the sofa cushion with an air of comfortable resignation, and smoked away with a calm

philosophic expression of face which defied all Jacob's critical interrogations.

Windgate Williams is not a very singular character on the press ; he was not, at all events, when Jacob Martyn was young. Windgate told fibs by the score—but they were amusing fictions. There was no malice in them ; they hurt no one ; they did not sting ; and the author of them was not offended if any one seemed to challenge his "facts." He loved to talk, and to talk about himself. He was content if you listened ; delighted if you took his points ; in ecstasies if you laughed at his jokes ; and with all this, at bottom, he was a kind-hearted, sympathetic fellow. For a time he had an excellent listener, while he had always a staunch friend, in Jacob Martyn.





CHAPTER XIX.

"WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE."

JACOB MARTYN'S first important business on the Dinsley paper was in connection with the trial of Ephraim Magar and Thomas Titsy for the wilful murder of Silas Collinson. And Thomas Titsy! Here was a discovery. It was sufficiently strange that Jacob should join the press as if for the very purpose of being associated with this trial, in which he was so deeply interested; but Tom Titsy at the bar was an incident far more astonishing than all that had gone before in Jacob's experience. But fact is indeed more strange and startling than fiction.

As this story progressed month by month in the chrysalis form of serial publication, prior to assuming the butterfly with three wings at the libraries, one of its numerous critics treated it very much after the fashion of the celebrated doubter who could not take in all the adventures of Gulliver. My unsophisticated friend is a countryman, on which account I am the more inclined to shake him by the hand; for there is a fresh well-spring of criticism in some of our dear old country newspapers. Was not the *Middleton Star* accustomed to deal with books with an independence of feeling and an impartiality of opinion that often startled authors and publishers to their very souls? My critic said this story was indeed stranger than fiction—stranger than fact truly; for whoever heard of a newspaper office being stormed by bailiffs, or a mayor committing murder? He evidently regarded these two incidents as a slight upon the press and an insult to the civic magistracy throughout the provinces.

Let me assure my friend that ingratitude is not one of my special sins, and as I have edited a country newspaper myself and had a narrow escape of being a mayor, I should not be likely to fix the stigma of impecuniosity and murder upon the two leading representative offices in the country.

When once a man begins to talk about himself, be he never so modest, it is hard to stop him, difficult for that man to pull up. I have been sorely tempted, in defence of my facts that are stranger than fiction, to give a list of newspapers which have fallen into the hands of the bailiffs or been undone by party intrigues, and the names of mayors who have committed murders—aye, and been hanged too, Master Brooke. But I fear this would bring me down to the level of the mere realistic school of authors—the domestic reporters of fiction. I therefore content myself with reminding my friend that the Burgomaster in “The Polish Jew” murdered a man for his money and burnt him in a lime-kiln; while Tobias Aconite, the Mayor of Hole-

cum-Corner, made the acquaintance of a Spanish devil for unjustly ordering Gaffer Nimmington to be whipped. Here, however, my mind misgives me. My friend may change his front, and charge me with getting my inspiration from "The Bells." I was congratulated when this story appeared in its originally crude shape—congratulated in a column of leader type—upon the fact that "Felix Holt" had not then seen daylight, though I only recognised in that story and this the similarity of a quack medicine exercising an important influence upon the conduct of the hero. For my own sake and the reader's, I wish there was a closer resemblance. My critic, however, pointed to an assize trial and an election. In those days I was his "fellow townsman" (provincial life is essentially clannish), and my fame was dear to his heart. He therefore set forth the fact that Doctor Horatio Johnson and his surroundings were created by his fellow townsman, and published in the year 1863, while "Felix Holt" and his patent medicine did

not come before the world until 1866. Even my friendly critic did not go so far as to class the two novelists together in the scale of merit; for I know he had read "Adam Bede," which would be sufficient for any sensible person to put "George Eliot" in the very highest niche of fame. May I remind my other critic that the conduct of the young squire in that never-to-be-forgotten story of "Adam Bede," which opens with a scent of pine-wood and elder-bushes, is not necessarily a condemnation of all the young squires of the midlands?

As to my inspiration for this romance of murder and retribution, it came to me (as I have already explained in a prefatory chapter) one morning on my way to a midland counties school. They carried Silas Collinson's remains across my path. I saw the poor bones huddled together in a stable. The discovery was a horrible incident, the murder a thousand times more barbarous and revolting than I have made it here. Mere physical horrors are beyond the region of art into which I have transferred

the tragedy of Middleton. The murderers thrived after the annihilation of their friend. It was long before Nemesis seized the chief criminal. The discovery was made as accidentally as I have set it forth ; the evidence was just as circumstantial—there was a poor forlorn woman like Susan, with a love token, in it ; a frightened burgess out late at night, with the memory of a strange cry ringing in his ears ; and other details of persons and things that belong to the original murder, though I have never read a line of the famous trial since I was sixteen years old. I still remember a dark gloomy day when the sun went out, and the air was filled with lightning and thunder and sheets of driving hail, in the midst of which they were hanging one of the men who murdered Silas Collinson.

Such is the origin of this story, which so strangely verifies the maxim of the old printer, Franklin. The *Middleton Star* is, I grant, a more shadowy creation. But I have known all these people ; some of them I know now ; and my greatest difficulty in

revising this history is a fear of altering even the crudities that belonged to the first idea. The very title of this chapter was suggested by me years ago (it was afterwards used by a novelist) to Mr. Gregory Spawling for a play which he had composed in admirable blank verse. Submitting it to the most successful playwright of the age, he was informed that the title was inadmissible. The Lord Chamberlain would not pass a scriptural title. They "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." It would have delighted my critic and defender of civic dignity to have read Jacob Martyn's magazine article on this subject. I will warrant you it dealt roundly with the shortcomings and short petticoats, or no petticoats for that matter, of the modern stage, which, though it was then matriculating for the advent of "*Traviata*" and "*Formosa*," could not commit the sin of a scriptural allusion in connection with a fine, well-written, and strictly moral play.

Forgive me, most considerate and friendly reader, for having led you this dance out of

the direct road upon which we started. It is a digression not to be defended. I will not, even with Armado's apt reply to Moth on my pen, attempt to qualify it by some mighty precedent. I apologise humbly, and ere I am tempted to sin again go, at once, straight back into the beaten track. The bells invite us. They are ringing lustily, as if the judges of assize were going to be married, or had daughters on their way to the hymeneal altar, or sons just coming of age. It is the assizes at Dinsley. The town is topsy-turvy. The theatre is open for a whole week with a famous company "for six nights only!" Dibble's Waxwork competes with the theatre. "There is no waiting, remember; you see the exhibition the moment you enter; there is no waiting, and the charge is two pence! Two pence will admit you!" Punch is murdering his wife in the High Street, to a numerous and highly delighted audience. Gingerbeer corks are flying into the air close by; a peep-show near the Castle is doing a very excellent business.

The policemen are in new clothes. The town-crier and a greengrocer are dressed up as heralds, and they blow their flourishes of trumpets with a marked independence of time and tune. The everlasting tan-nubbles are laid down near the assize courts to deaden the noise of traffic which does not exist ; and the Dinsley people are wondering whether there will be a double or single execution !

With a sad heart, Jacob entered the little box set apart for reporters in the Criminal Court of Dinsley Castle. The monitors of the press sharpened their pencils and nibbed their pens ; they opened their notebooks ; they looked round the court, and put their sandwiches in safe places. The retainers of various solicitors brought in numerous blue bags, which the said solicitors critically examined ; then the retained of the solicitors came into court and smiled at their retainers, and looked at their briefs as pleasantly as if murder was an unknown crime, and Dinsley Castle one of the temples of the Happy Valley. Javelin men, with

white wands, took up positions here and there about the body of the court; policemen gathered quite a harvest of sixpences from people who were crowding into the galleries; the brazen trumpets bellowed without; the crier of the court rose and said something in a loud voice; the trumpets ceased their discordant blare; the judges entered; everybody stood upon his own legs and upon everybody else's toes; and with the usual formalities of reading the proclamation against vice and immorality, and swearing in the jury, the court was opened.

While these various ceremonies were being performed two persons near Jacob were calmly discussing the case which had crowded the court with spectators.

"There seems to me to be very little evidence against the younger fellow of the two."

"Felon, you mean," said the other person, who chuckled at his own joke.

"I don't know about felon yet; no man's guilty till he's tried and condemned," said the other.

"Well, go on," said the wag; "give us the point."

"The evidence, I believe," continued the first speaker, "will be that Collinson was at Titsy's house on the evening of the murder; and that Titsy was seen with Magar the next morning after Magar had removed the body."

"Well?"

"And the police have some theory about the forged letters, which the Titsys always professed to regard as genuine; they make a point of young Titsy having an interest in Collinson's death, the poor fellow having cut Tom out as Susan's lover; and, above all, some property bearing Silas Collinson's initials has been found upon Tom, or at any rate in the house."

"That will hang him whether he's guilty or not," said the other speaker.

"Which property, I am told," went on the other, not noticing his friend's interruption, "Susan Harley will swear belonged to her, being, in fact, a present from the murdered man. What was it—a snuff-box or a watch?"

"A watch, I think! Well, we shall see. I'll take odds it's a double execution."

Jacob had been out of the world of news, local and general, so long, that he had not learnt, until after the supper at the lodgings of Mr. Williams, that his friends at Middleton were in trouble and tribulation. He had casually heard of a murder having been committed in the hated old borough, and although he noticed that the name of the Mayor was connected with the offence, it only seemed to him at the time that his worship had committed the offenders to gaol, not committed the crime himself. The subject had been talked about at a roadside inn where he had lodged for a night during his wanderings. The name of Middleton was particularly odious to him, and he had not cared to listen to any conversation about it, or to make any inquiries concerning the scene of his greatest misfortunes. It seemed as if fate had compelled him to accept the link that bound him to Susan and the Titsys; and as if he were to be punished anew through the horrors of this bar-

barous murder and the miseries of old friends.

Shortly after the court was opened, two prisoners were tried for minor offences, and sentenced; and during their removal the grand jury sent in the result of their investigations in the case of murder, which was read as follows by the clerk of arraigns :—

“ True bill against Ephraim Magar for the murder of Silas Collinson at Middleton, in the county of Dinsley, on the 15th of November, 18—.”

“ No true bill against Tom Titsy.”

A sudden shuffling of feet, a slight attempt at applause, and a sort of general gasp of relief followed the solemn announcement. The two men who had discussed Tom’s chances in Jacob’s hearing, looked at each other significantly. As for Jacob, his most severe efforts at self-control were necessary to keep him quiet in his seat. The other pressmen noticed his excitement, which they put down to his want of experience in connection with a branch of the

now fairly laughed ; for there were actually tears in his eyes.

Jacob could stay there no longer. He said he was ill, and a few words whispered to one of his colleagues, in which he intimated that Tom had been an old servant of his father, were sufficient to obtain for him the full performance of his business while he left the court for an hour.

To slip out of the box, and elbow his way through a group of attorneys' clerks and others who blocked up the passage allotted to "Solicitors and the Press," was the work of a few moments. As Jacob went forth at one door, he saw Susan and Mrs. Titsy leaving the court by another. They did not notice him. He felt afraid to intrude upon them at that moment. While he watched them an officer from the gaol, despatched by the kind-hearted governor, requested them to accompany him. Jacob followed. Turning from the noise and tumult, in front of the Assize Hall, the officer led the way across a green lawn (where a few daisies, sown by the

"March winds," had sprung up without waiting for the "April showers"), to the governor's house, which was at the entrance of the gaol. The officer knocked at the door, and they were shown into a little room, neatly furnished, and unadorned with the chains, manacles, pistols, clubs, daggers, and knives that garnished the walls of the governor's office. Jacob still followed. The officer was going to push him back. Jacob, however, slipped half-a-crown into his hand, and said, "I'm a friend." He still kept behind the two women, and carefully avoided their observation. They were received by a benevolent-looking lady, who told them to sit down. The officer went his way. The door was closed; and then Jacob stood in the presence of his old friends. For a moment neither of them knew him. But when he went up to Susan and kissed her, and then gave Mrs. Titsy a great smack on the cheek, and shook both her hands, his old friend smiled sadly, and began to cry afresh; while Susan's face beamed with surprise and pleasure.

None of them spoke. Jacob was shocked at the change which time and trouble had worked in the once comely features of his nurse.

A servant brought in a tray, and the benevolent lady made Mrs. Titsy and Susan drink. The glass trembled in the elder woman's hand. Joy was afflicting her now almost as much as sorrow had done before. Presently there was a heavy advancing footstep on the stairs. Then the door was suddenly opened; and Tom Titsy was in his mother's arms. Susan looked on with a calm smile of gladness. Jacob, in a whisper, declined the wine offered to him by the kind-hearted wife of the governor, who thereupon nodded pleasantly to him and disappeared.

Half an hour afterwards Jacob left his poor friends sitting hand in hand, too much impressed with the escape of the innocent to talk of it, too happy to put their gratitude into words.

"Have you met them? Have you met them?" said Dr. Johnson, who was running

over the Castle green towards Jacob. "I was told they had gone this way; I have been looking for them everywhere."

"In the governor's house," said Jacob.

"Good! What a fool I must have been to lose them;" and away went the Doctor, as nimbly as a boy, in the direction pointed out to him.

"Dear old fellow!" said Jacob, looking after him. "The heart of a woman and the courage of a lion, if he is but a quack doctor. Would there were no greater quacks in the world than this Middleton herbalist!"

THE END OF VOL. II.



